St. Charles
Carthagena, Ohio

JOHN T. NOONAN: Catholicism & Liberalism

COMMONWEAL

$2.00 March 25, 1994

BOOKS

STEPHANIE HARRINGTON on Diana & Lionel Trilling

Carl L. Bankston III on Divorce

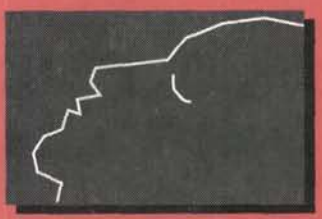
ROBERT WORTH on George V. Higgins

Screen: RICHARD ALLEVA

Media: FRANK McCONNELL

The Last Word EDWARD T. OAKES Repent!

SPENDTHRIFT MERCY
Christianity & the 'psychopathic saint'
SAMUEL HUX



Deaths observed

REMEMBERING SHARON
Terrence J. Moran

REMEMBERING JOY GRESHAM
Bel Kaufman

REMEMBERING CHRISTOPHER LASCH

**********3-DIGIT 458
CW 00079972 9422
ST CHARLES LIBRARY
ST CHARLES SEMINARY
2860 US RT 127
CARTHAGENA OH 45822-9999

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Dobrych swiat....

Cracow, Poland

To the Editors: Very best and most cordial greetings to all the *Commonweal* staff, and especially to Edward S. Skillin on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday.

JERZY TUROWICZ

The writer is editor-in-chief of Tygodnic Powneckny, *which he describes as "the Polish* Commonweal." *He is a mere eighty-one years old. The words in the heading are followed by "....*I Szczésliwego Nowego Roku," *which is to say:* "Joyeux Noel et Bonne Nouvelle Année."

Thanks for the memories

New Braintree, Mass.

To the Editors: If I hadn't been totally snowed in at the time, I certainly would have come to the jollifications for Edward Skillin's ninetieth birthday[Excelsior" February 11]. As it is, I must be content with sending my best wishes for his (and *Commonweal*'s) next decade.

I fondly remember My Very First Job, which was at *Commonweal*, where my knowledge of the alphabet enabled me to work on the files. Once, for example, when no one could find any record of a subscription for an order called Little Sisters of the Assumption (or something like that), I found it filed under "OF," since the card had been typed:

"Of the Assumption,
Little Sisters"

I also recall the day when Peggy Wright, the bookkeeper, began to laugh hysterically. She had just discovered that a big wooden cabinet that was locked up at 5 P.M. every day with a huge padlock had no back at all; to get at its contents, burglars would have needed only to move it away from the wall.

There was also the occasion when the receptionist, Nancy Bruno, kept a visitor, "Mr. Archie Duke," waiting quite a while in the anteroom, until it was discovered that he was Archduke Otto of Hapsburg. On another day there were screams of panic from early arrivals on finding a corpse on the floor of the inner office; it turned out to be the living and breathing body of the managing editor, Harry Lorin Binsse, who had spent the night sleeping there. (I also recall Harry's arrival at Edward and Jane Skillin's elegant wedding, looking as though he had just risen from that sleep.)

It's wonderful that Edward is still there to receive congratulations from one born simultaneously with the magazine. (My Trappist neighbors here gave me a great birthday party on my seventieth, last September.) I'm glad I spent some of those years with *Commonweal*—and thanks for the memories.

CLARE WILL FAULHABER

Thanks to 'Madelein'

Stone Park, Ill.

To the Editors: I am most grateful to "Madelein Gray" for her gripping account of her abortion decision ["Giving up the Gift," February 25]. With this one article, she has more than made up for her one mistake, because her words will enlighten, console, and heal people for years to come, and will help make priests like me sensitive, as Jesus would be, to her plight and the plight of her sisters.

I am sorry, however, that Madelein is convinced that the Catholic church, especially through its priests, is pitiless before a Catholic woman's experience of abortion. For priests who may have been heartless in such circumstances, I accept the shame and ask pardon for these brother priests. But most priests—and I know a great many—are not like that; most do share the compassion of Christ for these "Rachels mourning their children, refusing to be consoled because their children are no more" [Jer. 31:15-17].

It is worth noting that Cardinal Joseph Bernardin has invited all priests of the Chicago archdiocese to an all-day meeting this month on "Project Rachel," to be conducted for "priests who want to learn how to bring spiritual healing to families wounded by abortion."

GINO DALPIAZ, C.S.

Other abortion issues

Long Island, N.Y.

To the Editors: I share much common ground with the woman who wrote "Giving up the Gift," with respect both to the reasons for my own abortion and to the aftermath. It strikes me that genuine moral and spiritual issues confronted by real people get lost in the heated debates and political sloganeering from both sides of the abortion debate.

Like "Madelein Gray," I was not a teen-ager caught after having one too many unprotected sexual encounters, but a woman confronted by a moral dilemma affecting both my life and the welfare of my family should I continue a pregnancy that in all likelihood would kill me or leave me permanently maimed. The experience leaves me with many questions and few answers.

What is the value to the church of a woman's life once she becomes pregnant? Is it only to give life, no matter the

(Continued on page 26)

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1994 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $39; Canada, $41; foreign, $44. Special two-year rate: U.S. $67; Canada, $71; foreign, $77. Surcharge for air mail delivery to Europe, North Africa, Central or South America, $35 per year; for other parts of the world, $44 per year. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, Emil Antonucci; p. 8, Shiong, Rothco; p. 10, Donegan, Rothco; pp. 11, 17, 20, Jean Charlot; p. 15, Schwadron, Rothco; p. 18, Matt, Rothco.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXXI, Number 6

Correspondence:	2
Editorials:	3
Remembering Sharon: *Terrence J. Moran*	5
A Joy observed: *Bel Kaufman*	6
A world of difference: *Abigail McCarthy*	8
Where have the liberals gone?: *David R. Carlin, Jr.*	5
Spendthrift mercy: *Samuel Hux*	9
Poetry: *Mark Gunn*	14
There's God in the muck of life: *Ned O'Gorman*	15
Screen: *Richard Alleva*	16
Media: *Frank McConnell*	18

BOOKS

Catholicism and Liberalism, edited by R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach: *John T. Noonan*	20
The Beginning of the Journey, by Diana Trilling: *Stephanie Harrington*	21
Road to Divorce/Uncertain Unions/ Broken Lives, by Lawrence Stone: *Carl L. Bankston III*	22
Bomber's Law, by George V. Higgins: *Robert Worth*	24
Repent!: *Edward T. Oakes*	30

STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Associate Editor: Paul Baumann
Production Editor: Jacqueline Dowdell
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Business Manager: Richard Haas
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr., Sidney Callahan, Liz Leibold McCloskey, Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr.
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen P. Alava, Sandra Smith
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Commonweal *welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.*

The big thirst

Water is to survival as blood is to life: So elemental it goes unnoticed until it dries up or bursts its arteries; so essential we die fighting for it. In a sobering forecast of life in the twenty-first century ("The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic*, February 1994), Robert D. Kaplan writes that resource scarcity in the next century will lead to brutal wars, many over what he calls "the most important fluid of the twenty-first century"—water. Like most of us, Kaplan is late in realizing not only water's scarcity but its primacy. Perhaps that is because in the developed world water arrives at our tap so ready, fresh, and cheap that we fail to consider its preciousness. Though both live in areas that have the same annual rainfall, a resident of Phoenix, Arizona, uses twenty-times as much water as someone from Lodwar, Kenya (*see* Sandra Postel, *Last Oasis: Facing Water Scarcity*, Norton). Thanks to gigantic public water projects and the pumping of subterranean aquifers, residents of Phoenix and other metropolitan areas of the Southwestern United States are generally unaware of their false sense of water security.

While the developed world can remain oblivious for a short while longer, more than 233 million people in twenty-six countries already live in what the World Resources Institute designates "water-scarce nations." And these millions are a drop in the bucket compared to those who will face lifelong water shortages in the next century, not to mention those who already suffer a lifetime of disease because they rely on polluted and impure sources of water now. Of the earth's present 5.6 billion people, 1.2 billion lack access to potable water. The causes are many, including massive failures in governance. But the consequences are staggering: 80 percent of all diseases in the developing countries are related to tainted water.

Numbers matter. According to the United States Bureau of the Census, last year alone 87 million people were added to the earth's population. All are looking not only to quench their thirst, but to eat enough to survive and to grow; and over a lifetime, they will hope to build better lives for themselves and their families. All of this will require water. By the year 2030, the world's population is projected to grow to 8.9 billion. (Recall that the earth's population at the beginning of this century was but 1.6 billion.) While the need for water varies depending on climate, culture, and level of development, the amount of water available worldwide will not be increasing appreciably over present supplies. By 2030 the amount of water available per person worldwide will have shrunk to less than two-thirds of what it is today. That doesn't mean all will be affected the same way. But the big thirst will be here.

That thirst will not be the individual's alone. It will impinge on all communal human endeavors: churches, nations, cultures, continents. While some of the richer societies will be able to develop more efficient and cost-effective means of desalinization—an expensive process of last resort—these are not the countries where the largest pop-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ulation jumps will occur. According to Kaplan, 95 percent of such growth will take place in the poorer countries.

The problem then is looming, large, and perilous. Thus, environmentalists such as Postel and her colleagues at the Worldwatch Institute are being prudent when they appeal for a "water ethic" based on efficiency (conservation), equality (the protection and sustainable distribution of resources), and environmental integrity (one that determines the "carrying capacities" of various regions—not to mention the planet itself—and endeavors to live within them).

● Efficiency. As the supply of water will not greatly increase, the most important task is to use the water we have judiciously. It can be done. Since 1950, industrial use of water in the United States has dropped by 36 percent, even as real industrial output has increased by 3.7 percent. Much of this has been achieved through recycling water for multiple uses. As the price per unit charged for water has increased, there has been a marked improvement in the actual efficiency of its use. Water consumption drops from between 3 and 7 percent with a 10 percent increase in water price.

Two-thirds of fresh water is used in agriculture. In this country, farmers have been subsidized handsomely by federal and state governments in the form of public works projects and low water rates. This largess can no longer continue. Fortunately, farmers in the United States and worldwide have been developing significant mechanisms for low-tech water conservation. In Texas, a process called "surge" irrigation has helped some farmers reduce their water use by more than 15 percent. Elsewhere, new sprinkler designs have achieved reductions of up to 95 percent. And in Israel, drip irrigation that "feeds a plant with a teaspoon" by using computers and sensing monitors, has achieved efficiencies of 95 percent.

Still, the amount of water saved in such projects has been small compared to the quantities that must be conserved for domestic purposes in the next century. Meeting conservation goals is a promising reservoir; reducing irrigation use by *one-tenth* would nearly *double* the amount of water available for household use.

● Equality. A water ethic geared to enhancing a just sharing of water resources will aim not only at immediate sufficiency for oneself and one's neighbors, but at preserving the water quality for all.

There are profound political and strategic pressures associated with water distribution and quality. Since nearly 40 percent of the world's people live along river basins shared by more than one country, international law must be strengthened to guarantee access to clean water for all those along such waterways. At the present rate, Egypt—which is totally dependent on the Nile—will exceed its water needs by 60 percent within two decades. This is a recipe for internal disaster and regional tension.

So is the poor quality of drinking water. International disputes have arisen between the United States and Mexico over the quality of Colorado River water. Domestically, last April residents of Milwaukee were forced to boil their water for the better part of a month because farm runoff had fouled the city's water supply. Just as water "seeks its own level," so whatever is flushed into it affects others downstream, including other species. While industry in the U.S. has been forced to comply

---

Limits & hope

Historian, social critic, and *Commonweal* contributor Christopher Lasch died last month after a battle with cancer. He was sixty-one. Lasch, who taught at the University of Rochester, had been a major figure in American political and social thought since at least the publication of his 1979 best-seller *The Culture of Narcissism*. Politically and intellectually he was impossible to pigeonhole. His critique of elitist left-wing politics was as vehement as his dissection of capitalism and mass consumer culture. As such he helped establish a more self-critical and intellectually coherent liberalism, one to which the Catholic sense of the common good has much to contribute.

Commonweal contributor Jean Bethke Elshtain, of Vanderbilt University, delivered the eulogy for Lasch. We thought our readers might appreciate a glimpse of Elshtain's personal remembrance. To friends and family Lasch was known as "Kit."

"...Kit was a man of grace who found much of our politics graceless; a man of wit who found much of our politics witless; a man of purpose who lamented our culture's frenetic purposelessness; a man of hope who saw in boundless optimism a deep despair. From the beginning of his work to the end, he marked those 'fantasies of omnipotence' that underscored America's intellectual elite and threatened to swamp the culture itself.

"There were times when Kit was gloomy about our prospects. In one of his letters to me he expressed the fear that 'we are winning the argument but losing the culture.' If that, in fact, is not to be our fate we will owe Kit an even greater debt than the one we now rightly feel. For he would have us persevere. The 'better angels of our nature' might yet be rekindled and America brought back to what Kit considered her richest prospects—not measured by wealth—and her truest ideals—not measured by power. Over and over again, in thought, word, and deed, Kit was a philosopher, a moralist, a historian, a citizen who recognized limits. Only in that recognition lies a freedom worthy of the name. Only in that recognition lies a community worthy of devotion. Only in that recognition lies a culture worthy of free citizens. 'Limits and hope,' Kit wrote, 'these words sum up the line of argument I have tried to weave together.'"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with tough discharge standards because of the Clean Water Act of 1972, and while the result has been a marked improvement in water quality nationwide, still, more than one-third of our rivers and almost half of our lakes do not yet meet federal standards. The revised Clean Water Act now before Congress rightly stresses the control of other effluents, chiefly from farms and highways, into our water supplies. Congressman Gerry Studds (D-Mass.) has called for heavy fines to be assessed on polluters, and also for excise taxes to be included on the sale of various chemicals, pesticides, and fertilizers, all of which seep into the water systems and must eventually be purified. Since there is almost no money available for such purposes, his suggestion of charging users beforehand deserves serious consideration.

● Environmental integrity. We must come to live within our means, even to honor them. No longer can we afford to dry up underground aquifers or whole bodies of water, such as Russia's Aral Sea, for one particular generation's needs. We must begin to take the long view. Part of this will involve maintaining our wetlands because they replenish the aquifers, a crucial component in water sufficiency for tomorrow. The Senate version of the renewed water act calls not only for the conservation of wetlands but for their restoration.

When it comes to water conservation and pollution control, local initiatives will not be enough to accomplish this oceanic task. What will be needed is a vigorous and codified sense of the common good, one that will hold not only individuals but governments and regions accountable for preserving and enhancing water supplies. A serious look at population growth and at the earth's ability to sustain life is imperative. While no single-factor analysis (such as a simplistic call for population control) will adequately address this challenge, those who ignore population pressures are avoiding reality as well. Any solution to our mounting thirst for water, therefore, will have to combine moral candor, political will, careful conservation, and vision. It will be worth the effort.

REPORT FROM SCRANTON

REMEMBERING SHARON

A PEOPLE BORN IN THE GRAVE

I came across Kenneth A. Briggs's *Holy Siege: The Year that Shook Catholic America* (HarperSan Francisco) last year shortly after Christmas. Briggs was religion editor of the *New York Times* for eleven years. He is a Protestant, but singularly well-informed about the Catholic church in the United States, a church that seems to him to be a "ballet without a choreographer" these days. *Holy Siege* chronicles the American Catholic church from the fall of 1986 to the fall of 1987, the time of the last papal visit before the World Youth Day gathering last summer in Denver. Using a series of vignettes, Briggs focuses on events and issues that provoked passion, anguish, and endless discussion: Charles Curran's loss of the right to teach as a Catholic theologian; the crisis surrounding the Vatican investigation of Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen and the church of Seattle; the struggles of women for full participation in the church's life and ministry; 584 pages of these and related issues. It was perfect brain candy for the clerical mind during the lazy days between Christmas and New Year's. But just as I had settled down to read *Holy Siege* the phone rang. "Did you hear that Sharon died?" a friend asked. And suddenly all those other issues seemed oddly remote.

Sharon, the sister of a friend and fellow priest, was twenty-five-years old and had just succumbed to Hodgkin's disease. I barely knew her really, having only met her briefly several times at social gatherings. But through the eyes of her brother, Ed, I had followed the progress of a three-year struggle—of chemotherapy and bone marrow transplants, of lost hair and beleaguered hope.

I made plans to attend the wake and funeral with another friend, a classmate of Ed's. We drove in miserable weather to a little town in coal country, north of Scranton, Pennsylvania. We were two jaded New Yorkers trying unsuccessfully to follow directions such as, "bear right at the anchor at the center of town." It all looked like outskirts to us. The parish church was huge and beautiful in a way that Catholics of the last generation would instantly recognize. The marble, the stained glass, the statues, and murals were tributes to the immigrants who had built it and their children and grandchildren who proudly maintain it. The church was full for the funeral with many priests and religious women and more of "the faithful"—what a true and lovely name. Most of Ed's homily consisted of letters to him from Sharon. They were long letters, especially for a young woman who never knew a world before the telephone, and they were funny and full of concern for her parents and brothers and sisters. They were utterly unself-preoccupied; letters, in fact, of one of the faithful. At the end of the homily, Ed played a tape of a song that he had recently heard on the radio by a group called "Escape Club":

Don't be afraid, o my love
I'll be watching you from above
And I'd give all the world tonight,
To be with you.
'cuz I'm on your side, I still care.
I may have died but I've gone no where.
Just think of me and I'll be there.
Just think of me and I'll be there.

Ed spoke of the power of memory in our tradition. When the community gathers to remember the story of the Deathless Christ, the story becomes food and the memory gives life. And so when Sharon's family and friends remember, we, with her, are swept up in the circle of invincible life. Perhaps the defining moment came after the homily. Sharon's parents presented the bread and wine, and their son and Sharon's brother swept them all into his embrace, juggling the cruets and ciborium in his hands. It was a palpable image of the manifold ways our tradition al-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RELIGION & THE MEDIA

As part of *Commonweal*'s 70th anniversary celebration, the editors are organizing three public meetings on religion and the media. The first will take place at Loyola University in Chicago on Thursday, June 9, the other two in Washington, D.C. and New York in the fall. Loyola University is serving as cosponsor of the Chicago gathering. The project is partially supported through a grant from the Catholic Communication Campaign.

For further information, please write:

COMMONWEAL
15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038

lows us to give and receive life.

You've probably been to a funeral much like it and that's just the point, isn't it? At times like this we are invincibly the faithful. We are at our best. We are most ourselves. In one of his sermons Paul Tillich tells the story of a witness at the Nuremberg war crime trials. He and some others had escaped from a concentration camp. For a time the only place they could find to live was in a Jewish cemetery. During this time he wrote poetry, and one of his poems was the description of a birth. In a grave nearby a young woman had given birth to a boy. The eighty-year-old grave digger assisted. When the newborn uttered his first cry the old man prayed, "Great God, has Thou finally sent the Messiah to us? For who else than the Messiah can be born in a grave?"

Standing beside the grave of a valiant young woman, we are at our best. We are ourselves, invincibly the faithful, the people born in a grave, looking unflinchingly into the face of absurdity. Simone de Beauvoir, in her memoir of the last days of Jean-Paul Sartre, describes a man preoccupied with stashed bottles of liquor and nubile companions—the man who made a career of thumbing his nose at the existential void. There's something sad about that—and there's something spectacular about Sharon and the community that gave her birth and supported her to the end.

At the Final Commendation we sang the "*In Paradisum.*" These are ancient words written in a society in which 75 percent of those born died by age twenty-six—a society full of Sharons. The death of a young person is such a tragedy to us because of its relative rarity. Our ancestors stood at a graveside like Sharon's far more often than we do and yet launched these words of hope into the void.

> May the angels lead you into paradise;
> the martyrs welcome you
> and take you to the holy city,
> the new and eternal Jerusalem.
> May the choirs of angels welcome you
> and lead you to the bosom of Abraham
> and where Lazarus is poor no longer
> may you find eternal rest.

The composer of the Final Commendation never heard of "Escape Club," but his or her point isn't too different. We may die, but we're not going anywhere. We are swept deeper into life with the angels and Abraham and Sarah and Lazarus no longer poor, swept deeper into life with the coal miners who threw their quarters into the building fund, with the community of the faithful, born in a grave. I have few illusions about small-town life. I know that plenty of coal miners slapped their quarters down on the counter of a bar as well as into the collection plate. But I also know that in that small town enough people came to the door of Sharon's family with covered dishes to feed everyone at the funeral and then some. How often we get it wrong but how beautiful we are when we get it right. We, the faithful, the people born in a grave, with food enough for everybody.

After the funeral I got back to Briggs's book, but it had lost some of its appeal. I found the reason for my uneasiness in a poem by John Ciardi titled "Credibility."

> Who could believe an ant in theory?
> a giraffe in blueprint?
> Ten thousand doctors of what's possible
> could reason half the jungle out of being.
> I speak of love, and something more,
> to say we are the thing that proves itself
> not against reason, but impossibly true,
> and therefore to teach reason reason.

Briggs and I and most of us much of the time are "doctors of the impossible," of ecclesial theories and blueprints. We need to renew our membership in the community born in the grave, "the thing that proves itself not against reason, but impossibly true." It's not that I don't often feel that my vision of the church is under siege from a number of quarters. And I probably won't stop rolling my eyes at the latest inanity in the diocesan paper. But I want to think more about Sharon and her people and mine—the people born in a grave. I want always to hear the response of a woman at Sharon's wake to someone who said, "Such a tragedy; she had her whole life ahead of her." "She still does," the faithful woman answered, "she still does."

TERRENCE J. MORAN

Terrence J. Moran, C.SS.R., teaches in the Theology and Religious Studies Department of Saint John's University and lives at Most Holy Redeemer Rectory, New York City.

ILLUMINATING 'SHADOWLANDS'

A JOY OBSERVED

C.S. LEWIS IN LOVE

For me, seeing the film *Shadowlands* was like watching shadowy characters superimposed on people I had known in real life. The uncommon love story between the writer, C.S. Lewis, and my friend, Joy Davidman Gresham, who died of cancer shortly after their marriage, was true. But the film tells very little about Joy herself—who she was, and why someone like Clive Stapleton Lewis, Christian theologian, Oxford don, and confirmed bachelor, fell in love with a Jewish divorcee sixteen years

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his junior and married her though she was dying.

Joy was a remarkable person, a gifted poet and novelist, a rebel, an original, whose intellectual and spiritual qualities Lewis recognized. Most important was the strong bond of their common religious faith.

I met Joy in the early 1930s at Hunter College; she was my close friend and schoolmate. In the college yearbook, among the photos of the graduates, all women, all young, all with identical discreet black velvet V-necks and marcelled hair, I see my own photo—how young I was! And here is Joy, with her dark, limpid doe eyes and soft round face, looking grave and lovely. She did not have time to grow old; she died in her forties.

We both went on to Columbia for graduate work, she in seventeenth-, I in eighteenth-century English literature. In those days I was diffident, and what I admired most in Joy was her daring and independence. Though ladylike, cultivated, and soft-spoken, she liked to jolt others by her nonconformity. I remember how shocked we were (this was in 1933!) when she mentioned that she used to go to burlesque shows. And there were strong rumors in college that she was having an affair with one of our professors of English—a rumor she did not deny. It gave her a kind of status in our unsophisticated eyes.

Her collection of poetry, *Letter to a Comrade*, won the Yale Series of Younger Poets award in 1938. She also edited an anthology of antifascist war poems, for which she induced me to translate a half-dozen Russian poems into English. She inscribed it to me "with affection for the damndest reasons."

She often seemed sad and restless, as if seeking for something in literature, in poetry, in politics, in fads, in religion, embracing various causes, rejecting them. For a while she was an ardent Communist. Disillusioned, she renounced communism in the press, in a series of articles which created a bit of a scandal.

When she married William Lindsay Gresham, author of *Nightmare Alley*, a novel about circus geeks, they both became involved in L. Ron Hubbard's dianetics, a technique later discredited and more recently resurfaced as Scientology. I remember how Joy and Bill used to run "engrams" through each other; these were supposed to reach earliest memories. Once they tried it on me, and I pretended to recall a prenatal experience, just to please Joy.

Although they had two sons, David and Douglas, only Douglas is shown in the film. But if *Fiddler on the Roof* can subtract two of Tevye's daughters from the seven Sholom Aleichem had given him, then why shouldn't *Shadowlands* subtract one from Joy?

Bill had a temper; when he was angry he would go down to the basement of their house and shoot a rifle. Joy was no mean shot herself. What with engrams and gun shots, it was a stormy marriage.

Joy turned to Christianity and began a correspondence with C.S. Lewis, whose theological writings she admired. One of his books, prophetically titled *Surprised by Joy*, written before he had met Joy, was not about her but about searching for faith and finding it. Joy went to England to meet him, came home, returned to England with her two small sons, and began to write me letters describing how she and Jack (as Lewis was called) would walk on the moors and hold hands, and how hopeless it was for her to love him.

After she divorced Bill, Lewis married her "in name only," to give her and her two sons British nationality. But it was only after she contracted cancer that their real marriage took place in a hospital in Oxford, where Joy lay dying. She was given no more than a few days to live. Jack brought her to his home in the Kilns, on the outskirts of Oxford, where he took care of her, and where she miraculously recovered. They thought she was cured, but she wasn't. She died three years later.

I was privy to a brief glimpse of their life at the Kilns when I was invited to visit them in 1957. There I met Jack and his brother Warren, and saw Joy in bed, fatally ill. She never looked happier. I found Jack more handsome than his book jacket photos—a charmer and a delightful raconteur.

He told me a story he was afraid was a bit too risqué for my American ears, until Joy reassured him. It seems a women's college nearby gave a production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* with an all-women's cast, which he was invited to see. When it was over, he was asked to say a few words about it. "I told them"—here he harrumphed a bit, perhaps he even blushed—"I told them this was the first time I have ever seen a female Bottom."

A page from my diary entry on Sunday, August 25, 1957:

Freezing day. To Oxford. Loved Jack Lewis on sight. Brother Warren (Warnie)—very tweedy-British. Joy looks wonderful, though in bed. Gravely ill; knows it. Jack, too, has osteosomething, back pains. Brought gifts: Gave Joy hankie, French lipstick & scent, silver earrings. Gave Jack tie and brandy. Talked. Pheasant for lunch. Walked on moors in high wind with Joy's nurse. Tea and Scrabble, in all languages. Very learned! (Send them Blotto.) Cold supper. Jack told "daring" story re Bottom. More talk with Joy. To bed with hot water bottle.

Slept very well. Woke in freezing room. Fine breakfast served by Mrs. Miller (housekeeper). Talked with Joy about love. She: "Now I know that the poets and the movies are right; it does *exist!*

Ambulance came to take her to hospital for treatment. Said good-by—(final?).

Not quite final. Joy rallied, went into remission, wrote me that she was able to walk with a cane, to work in her garden. She and Jack even managed a trip to Greece, in her wheel chair, a year before she died.

Jack took her death very hard. Having at last found love, he tried to come to terms with his loss and with his faith in a brief and moving book, *A Grief Observed*. Not long after that, he too died.

And now, in the shadowland of the screen, here they are: Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger pretending to be Jack Lewis and my friend Joy.

When the movie was over and we were leaving the theater, I asked my husband: "Why is your necktie wet?" He had been crying.

Perhaps the poets and movies are right, after all.

BEL KAUFMAN

Bel Kaufman is author of Up the Down Staircase. *This essay is part of a work in progress.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

NOT THE ONE I WANTED TO BUILD

For some time now I have been telling friends that I think I will call the memoir of the last twenty-five years on which I have been working *From Another Country* to emphasize how different the world into which I was born was from the world in which we live today.

Now, having just plowed through the accumulated mail after a short vacation, I am thinking of calling it *A World I Never Made*. The magazines, the newsletters, even the personal letters, taken all together give a kaleidoscopic view of a world in which things have gone awry or are passing strange. I find the cumulative effect of such a concentrated overview bewildering or depressing.

Take first the periodicals: On the cover of the *Washingtonian*, our local city magazine, is the picture of a healthy, happy fifteen-month-old named Hannah. Inside is the story of how her mother, a single, college-educated professional woman in her thirties, selected her father from among the anonymous donors to a sperm bank.

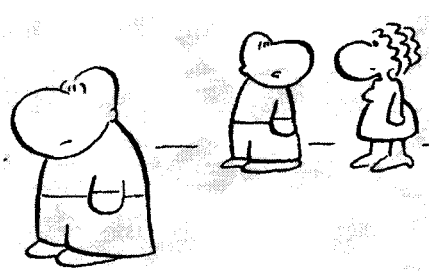
Hannah's mother is aware of the difficulties Hannah may face in the future, but she is reassured by the experiences of women in the support group called *Single Mothers by Choice*. From them and their children, Hannah will learn that her situation is not unique. The group has 2,000 members nationwide. The local chapter has 50 members—most of them professional women in their late thirties and early forties.

What am I to make of this? Certainly I cannot wish that Hannah not exist. Nor can I want to deny the joys of motherhood to so many intelligent, productive women. Yet Hannah's story implies a daunting gamut of moral problems posed by choices in the field of reproduction and "advances" in the field of genetics. Choosing a father from a sperm bank seems less problematic when I think of surrogate mothers, embryonic beginnings in a dish, frozen multiple embryos and the controversies over who owns them, etc. And genetic engineering is a science in its infancy!

Hannah's mother's choice would have been unimaginable to me and my contemporaries when we were her age, as would have been the choices of those in her support group. Hence I cannot judge these choices in terms of the morality I took for granted in the first three or four decades of my life. The complexities are too various and numerous.

Another, to me, bewildering cover story appears in the next magazine in the pile, the *New Republic* for March 14. It is subtitled, "What Happens When Prozac Meets Universal Health Care?" The author, Robert Wright, raises questions about mental-health care that suggest that we may in some ways have caught up with George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Given the advances in chemical cures for mental illness, it is possible for the government to make all unhappy people, if not quiescent like Orwell's people, at least happy.

The Clinton health plan, Wright points out, calls for mental-health coverage for those with diagnosable mental illnesses, including those that impair function "in the family, work, school, or community activities." That coverage could include treatment by psychotherapy or psychopharmacology (treatment by mind-alerting drugs). Mental-health advocates like Ira Magaziner and Tipper Gore point to the latter as cheaper and more certain treatment.



"It's really tragic—a test-tube baby with an Oedipus complex."

Wright uses the example of Prozac to illustrate the problem thus presented: What does it mean if the government approves, even provides, a drug that alters the personality? Does it bear some responsibility for altering the patient's biochemistry—his or her physical self? Prozac now is the preferred antidepressant of the affluent. It raises self-esteem. The Prozac personality is "upbeat, self-assured, efficient." But it may also be egocentric and less given to concern for others than heretofore. Clearly then a "Prozac cure" for the individual may have larger social effects. Wright argues that when recommended drugs affect the conscience or sexual impulses of those who take them, the government is making moral policy. Drugs that are safe and effective and make the patient feel better, it seems, may do more harm to society as a whole. These, surely, are the problems of a world never envisioned when we first made mental health a cause.

And then come the continuing problems—not so much bewildering as depressing. First of all the problem of the inculcation of hatred as described in *Time*'s February 28 issue with Louis Farrakhan on the cover. Just as the outbreaks of ethnic hatred in Europe were eventually unleashed by our well-meant doctrine of self-determination, our civil rights movement made continuing racism more visible and had its strange by-product in Farrakhan's message of hatred.

The fostering of hate is not reserved for that *between* the races. In one of the piled-up newspapers I read of a black musician who says he is exhausted by black-on-black cruelty and irresponsibility and the pressure put upon him to excuse it. He talks about "gangsta rap" where practitioners sing about killing black men and abusing black women, thus fomenting mindless hatred.

In the same paper I read of the growing movement to allow relatives of victims to witness the execution of criminals—this in the state of Virginia, "the mother of presidents," which, alas, puts more murderers to death in a year than all but two other states. Certainly this trend toward witnessing executions certifies hatred as much

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as it brings "closure," as the proponents claim. One thinks of the old man on the subway quoted in the *New York Times* on March 2: "It's all hate," he said. "I'll be glad when I'm dead and gone. The world used to be a good place." We must sympathize with him—we who were once so sure that the interracial justice we worked for was inevitable and that capital punishment would soon be abolished. What happened to the world we tried to make?

Although I am inclined to claim that our present unhappy turbulent world is one I never made, I cannot be totally sure of that. So often, in life's queer ironies, the well-intentioned has unintended consequences. Any change has multiple effects. Too many changes, too quickly brought about, may have loosened us from our moorings.

And the mail is full of news from people who struggle on to make things right. Amnesty International reminds me of the 40,000 prisoners of conscience and victims of torture released by its efforts all over the world. The Citizens for Nuclear Safety ask for support for an initiative to convene a presidential commission on nuclear waste to deal with the dangers of radiation-contaminated sites throughout the country (recently revealed to be in the thousands). The Catholic Worker, the members of So Others May Eat (SOME), the workers for The Second Harvest Food Bank, and so many others try to feed the hungry. Others struggle to shelter the homeless. Police athletic clubs offer recreation to youngsters off the street. So many pleas. And all important.

Last of all, the personal letters remind me that the world is still a place in which friendships flourish and are nurtured by the marvels of modern communication. One may call home via credit card from a village in New Guinea to a house in Connecticut, as one of my friend's son did, or Fax daily letters from Bangkok to wife and children in Washington, as did another. Distance no longer separates.

It is different from the world I was born into; it is full of that which I mourn and deplore; but it is the only world we have and the one in which we must live and work and strive to do better. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

WHERE HAVE THE LIBERALS GONE?

DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO SPEAK—SELECTIVELY

In late February of this year Pope John Paul II issued a statement in which he condemned the idea of same-sex marriages.

Within a short time American spokespersons for the gay rights movement, to the surprise of absolutely no one, were condemning the pope's statement as "homophobic." More specifically, they were saying that the "homophobic" head of a "homophobic" church was uttering "homophobic" doctrine.

Just a brief pause here for purposes of definition. Homophobia is bigotry against homosexuals and homosexual conduct; a form of bigotry that arises from an irrational fear (or "phobia") of homosexuality.

Keeping this definition in mind, let's analyze what is being said when the pope's statement is condemned as homophobic. The charge is (a) that the pope is a bigot, (b) that the Catholic church is a bigoted church, and (c) that the ancient Christian teaching on the immorality of homosexuality—a teaching that goes back to the very beginnings of Christianity—is a bigoted teaching.

For purposes of the present discussion, I'm not interested in the question of whether homosexual conduct is or is not immoral. That's a matter on which Americans will have a variety of opinions, depending on the diversity of their religious and moral views.

No, what I'm interested in today is a

NEW IN PAPERBACK

Pilgrim in the Ruins

A LIFE OF Walker Percy

BY JAY TOLSON

■ ■ ■

Southern Book Award for Nonfiction, Southern Book Critics Circle, 1993

Named one of 1992's Notable Books by the New York Times Book Review

Named one of the Ten Best Books of 1992 by USA Today

■ ■ ■

"No one has explored Percy's early life with the thoroughness and knowing subtlety Tolson has managed."—Robert Coles, *Commonweal*

Jay Tolson's masterful biography of the author of *The Moviegoer* is now available in paperback. With a novelist's eye for character and the judgment of an informed critic, Tolson captures the lifelong drama of genius, always attentive to its artistic, psychological, and spiritual dimensions.

544 pp., $16.95 paper
A Chapel Hill Book

■ ■ ■

at bookstores or by toll-free order
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS
Chapel Hill
Phone (800) 848-6224 or
Fax (800) 272-6817

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

APOLOGIES

We have just discovered that the following memberships in the Commonweal Associates were not gratefully acknowledged, or listed, as they should have been, in our February 11 issue.

Maureen O'Brien and Andrew Beckman, MA
Rev. Joseph Bruetsch, IN
Marie Hoff, ID

question on which Americans really ought to have unanimity of opinion, namely, the question of whether Catholics have a right to believe that homosexual conduct is immoral and to express this belief publicly.

The traditional answer to this question has of course been Yes. For in expressing their belief in the immorality of such conduct, these Catholics are doing no more than reiterating the traditional teaching of their religion—a religion, by the way, which is not a hole-in-corner or Johnny-come-lately operation, but has been operating in the broad light of day, over a large part of the earth's surface, for nearly two thousand years now. By the traditional American rules of the game, people have been free to express their religious convictions without being denounced as bigots.

But no more. At least not when it comes to homosexuality. From the point of view of the gay rights movement, Catholics (and other religious believers) are no longer free to express their agreement with the teaching of their church on this subject. If Catholics wish to escape suspicion of bigotry, they will have to make it clear that they are dissidents, that they condemn the deplorable views on same-sex lovemaking held by pope and church.

I was a teen-ager during the Joe McCarthy years, and I remember that era vividly. Old-fashioned liberals of those days used to say things like, "I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." They were exaggerating, of course, especially that part about "to the death." But at least they had a clear understanding as to what liberalism meant; they understood what mental freedom was all about.

But those old-fashioned liberals are gone. If they were not, they would have come out of the woodwork a long time ago, defending the right of Catholics to disapprove of homosexuality, saying, "I may disagree with your religious faith and its moral teachings, but that's not the point; the point is that I will defend to the death your right to express this faith and these teachings."

From today's new-style liberal we can expect no such liberality, for new-style liberalism doesn't really believe in freedom of thought. More accurately, it believes in freedom of thought only so long as that thought is of a nonreligious or antireligious nature; but it's quite a different story when it comes to the expression of religious ideas.

"We thoroughly disapprove of your insistence on tomato sauce with the 'sole meunière,' sir, but would defend to the death your right to be embarrassed about it."

Consider, for example, the question of whether taxpayer money should be spent to fund artistic projects that most taxpayers would consider grossly obscene or flagrantly sacrilegious. One's liberal credentials will be revoked immediately if one views a termination of such taxpayer support as anything other than censorship. From the viewpoint of conventional liberalism, taxpayers have a First Amendment obligation to pay for work they find profoundly offensive. But wild horses won't drag the liberal into condemning the man shouting "Vile homophobe!" at the pope. Upon closer inspection, it turns out that it is often the liberal himself doing the shouting.

"Oh, never mind," somebody will say. "Sticks and stones will break my bones, etc. But so what? What does it really matter if the gay rights crowd calls Catholics bigots?"

The truth is, it matters quite a lot.

For one thing, in a society that celebrates "cultural diversity," it becomes increasingly difficult to agree upon a common moral code, and as a result tolerance or nonjudgmentalism becomes the ultimate virtue. Correspondingly, intolerance or bigotry becomes the supreme vice. Thus there is hardly a term in the contemporary American lexicon of abuse worse than "bigot." So to say that Catholics who hold traditional views on homosexuality are bigots is to say that they are as bad as bad can be. It is to accuse them of being thoroughly un-American.

For another, the gay rights movement is not some pesky fringe operation, whose attacks no self-respecting party would deign to notice. Quite the contrary, the movement is well-connected and extremely influential. It has many friends in Hollywood, in the White House, and in the editorial board room of the *New York Times*.

Finally, the gay rights movement is a key element in contemporary secularism's attack on religion, the most sustained and vigorous attack in the history of this country. The antireligious attack is never direct, a thrust to the heart. Instead it is a matter of cutting off limbs and appendages: a finger here, a foot there, an arm somewhere else. Thus we rarely run into someone saying, "Down with God!" But everyday we run into people saying, "Up with abortion!" and "Up with gay marriage!" and "Up with condoms in the schools!" and "Let's force the religiously orthodox to pay for abortions!" and "Let's stigmatize them as bigots when they refuse to endorse homosexual relations!" In other words, secularism will be happy to allow Catholics and others to retain possession of their religion, provided they retain only the part that remains after the amputation of all traditional morality. Which is to say: after nothing remains at all except a mutilated corpse.

If we succumb to this intimidation, we will become the faith that dares not speak its name. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SPENDTHRIFT MERCY

CHRISTIANITY & THE 'PSYCHOPATHIC SAINT'

SAMUEL HUX

Kenneth Burke used to talk about "perspective by incongruity": cocking one's head a different angle, taking a quirky (even cranky) look at some subject in order to see it anew, relieved of one's normal perspective with its accumulated associations. A kind of phenomenological gambit. I'm going to make some observations about an odd moral ambivalence in the Christian mechanics of mercy: a certain imaginative relation between criminality and grace. This will require a somewhat serpentine process of thought—and I appreciate the irony of that adjective.

Recall the scene in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* when the choice is forced. Auschwitz. Prisoners to left or right; sorted for death now or later. SS doctor "Jemand von Niemand," finding that Sophie Zawistowska is neither Jewish nor Communist but Catholic, grants a dispensation to one of Sophie's children but not to both, if *she* will choose which. Styron then provides a motive for this Dr. Somebody McNobody: What he "lusted to do" was inflict upon someone "a totally unpardonable sin," a lusting which showed that "his strivings were essentially religious." Pursuing with sullen mechanical monotony his bestial offices in a place where every sin is possible, so much so that sin itself has vanished with the loss of distinction and meaning, the doctor had begun to wonder "*Wo, wo ist der lebende Gott?*" and had come to "his own realization that the absence of sin and the absence of God were inseparably intertwined." So, "while his soul thirsted for beatitude," he recreated God by recreating sin through Sophie's choice.

A great deal of Styron's novel gave me trouble, but, odd to say, this grotesque parody of religiosity did not. Not that one finds the "holy sin," even in less repulsive forms than Dr. Jemand von Niemand's, endorsed by Christian doctrine as a mode of religious striving—of course not. Not even Kierkegaard's notion that the greatest sinners are often the most profoundly religious is a prescription for attaining salvation; it's only an undeniable observation. And in his passionate meditation on faith, *Fear and Trembling*, the "teleological suspension of the ethical" is not something recommended to the reader: he is only challenged to admire the "knight of faith" like Abraham, who, with dread in his heart, not certainty in his mind, would slay his son at the Lord's command. "No one is so great as Abraham! Who is capable of understanding him?" And the reader is allowed to sigh relief that few are called upon to imitate Abraham. The modern reader, on meeting today such a knight of faith who claimed to be acting on instructions from the Lord, would say "he's simply quite mad," and I doubt that one would find very easily a priest who would disagree.

But even so, the Abraham and Isaac story is of a man who would obey the Lord and kill if commanded, and that is a different thing from commanding life and death by one's own will as a surreal and chillingly inane (however poetic!) way of attaining beatitude. There is no prescription for this nonsense in Christian doctrine. But the matter is just not that simple.

Although the holy sinner remains outside Christian *doctrine*, the holy sinner has long fascinated those broadly or closely within the Christian *tradition*: that figure of obscure and crippled "election" reaching back as far as Judas Iscariot, whom some Christians are startled to find at the pit of Dante's Inferno, having unthinkingly assumed he was somehow yet saved, such is, in Graham Greene's phrase with the pregnant ellipsis, "the...appalling...strangeness of the mercy of God."

Thomas Mann's near-priest Naphta in *The Magic Mountain*, whose idea of Christian charity translates into totalitarian terror; his Adrian Leverkühn in *Doctor Faustus*, whose pact with

SAMUEL HUX *is professor of English and co-director of the Western Civilization program at York College, City University of New York.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the devil is conceived as an "irresistible challenge [for salvation] to the Everlasting Goodness"; Melville's Captain Ahab, whose spiritual size increases with his monomania, whose hatred of creation seems a poetic equivalent of prayer: call them "psychopathic saints," as are some figures who stride through Dostoevsky's "grotesque, apocalyptic realm of suffering," as Mann called it. I settle on Greene for the sake of his Pinkie Brown, "the Boy," the seventeen-year-old killer of *Brighton Rock*: emotionally impotent except for rage, culturally illiterate but for a certainty of hell's existence, a maybe toward heaven, and a flickering memory of childhood lessons on mercy—"Between the stirrup and the ground, something he sought and something found." When he falls from cliff to death we don't know whether he sought and found or not, but he is the occasion for the priest's speculation on the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God. It would be false to suggest that Greene *says* the Boy is a *saint* of psychopathic variety. But the Boy's nemesis, Ida Arnold, above (or below) complexities because she knows that Right is Right and Wrong is Wrong, is made into a kind of avenging angel of *petit-bourgeois* morality, and in comparison with her the Boy is made to seem fate-struck and singed with terrible grace. It's all so vague, evocative. But that's the point with the superior fascination of the blessed-damned over the plodding moralist who does good and even enjoys it.

Were the Boy literate he might have appreciated Flaubert's novella, *The Legend of Saint Julian Hospitaller,* the story of a boy-huntsman who massacres animals not for food but to sate a blood lust almost ascetic in its intensity, becomes a great soldier, eventually kills his own parents, does penance as a hermit-ferryman, and ultimately attains salvation. He warms the body of an apparent dying leper with his naked flesh in a parody of lovemaking, "mouth to mouth and chest to chest," until "the roof flew off, the firmament unrolled, and Julian rose towards the blue spaces, face to face with Our Lord Jesus, who carried him to heaven." *On* the surface, as it was on the stained-glass window of Rouen Cathedral where Flaubert found it: a legend of redemption through penance. But *in* the story's logic: the legend of a figure so worthy of special grace because made so strange by his crimes. They are the *prerequisites*—such are irony, paradox, the mysteries!—of his salvation.

It's time to confess that for all my fascination with the psychopathic saint I am not truly as interested in him, member of a frail minority probably more literary than historical, as in what he tells us about the tradition that makes him even conceivable. "The church does not demand that we believe any soul is cut off from mercy," the priest in Greene's novel says. I find that a moving statement in its compassion. But, ironically, I also find it unsettling precisely in the liberality of its compassion. Whence the liberality?

In *The Gnostic Gospels*, Elaine Pagels has tried to explain why in the pitched battle for the early church between gnosticism and what became orthodoxy, the orthodox won. Gnosticism with its claims to *gnosis*—"special knowledge" of the few beyond the essentials set down in Scripture—was really a form of spiritual elitism, and, in its intolerance of the human weakness for basic worldly comforts, a form of ascetic elitism. Had the gnostics won, the church would have been an anarchic collection of saints, each going wherever his *gnosis* led him. The bishops appreciated the danger and created a church more inclusive. As Pagels puts it, "Whoever confessed the creed, accepted the ritual of baptism, participated in worship, and obeyed the clergy was accepted as a fellow Christian. Seeking to unify the diverse churches...the bishops eliminated qualitative criteria for church membership." To evaluate each candidate for "spiritual maturity," as the gnostics would do, would exclude too many. "To become truly *catholic*—universal—the church rejected all forms of elitism," priesthood excepted, "attempting to include as many as possible within its embrace." It followed in effect the reasoning of Origen, the third-century church father, that (Pagels's words), "God would not have offered a way of salvation accessible only to an intellectual or spiritual elite. What the church teaches...must be simple, unanimous, accessible to all."

This inclusiveness is reasonable enough; indeed, I think it noble. But it's also an adjustment of religious requirements to those of human nature: not exactly the profound transformation of human nature on which the gnostics would have risked everything. So, on the one hand, with qualitative considerations compromised, you have a church which preaches against sin but is going to have to be rather tolerant of the sinner. Mercy isn't license, but it isn't a whip either. And on the other hand, while the orthodox won and created a church irrevocably inclusive, a community of the worthy and the unworthy (the church of Augustine, one might say, who had been both) with differences mediated by the function of mercy, gnosticism did not exactly lose, surviving (transformed) as a submerged presence in the Christian tradition. This is essential. Let me try to get it right.

Orthodoxy would *forgive* so much. Gnosticism, *demanding* so much, would seem a counterurge to the liberality. That's not the case, however, for gnosticism effectively did what it had no interest in doing: it indirectly seconded the liberality. The point is that the demands of gnosticism were seldom *ethical*. While ethics demands a certain modest, minimal clarity, the gnostic devoted his energies to a kind of blinding obscurity, as if tendering an invitation to be astonished at his brave grasp of the precarious rhythms of the ineffable. Rather than an ethics, gnosticism was a psychological assertiveness, a fevered epistemology: not a movement for *correct behavior* (although, shun the worldly!) but for *special knowledge* not constrained by canonical Scripture and morals. And that makes all the difference in the world.

Now, Saint Paul's elevation of faith over good works was surely not meant as a denigration of the latter—this in spite of the fact that Paul, in his revolutionary urgency, indulged an often violent rhetoric (in Romans especially) by which we are discharged from the law, dead to it, no longer its captives. But subsequent generations don't always read us as we would wish to be read. And if ours is a large world view, rich and paradoxical as Paul's was, it will assuredly be read in ways we don't conceive. (There seems to be some historical law governing here.) Those gnostic urges to special condition removed from biblical commands lived on in a kind of *too-literal* "Pauline"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imagination, the unorthodox tradition of "antinomianism": the belief that since the elect receive salvation through the faith which is the free gift of grace and not through any personal moral effort, it follows that, first, the Mosaic Law has been superseded or rendered irrelevant, and, second, that the saved are free of mundane moral obligation.

The second-century radical, Marcion (a pure Paulist in his own eyes), would have rid Christianity of all Jewish "impurities," including the so-called Old Testament in its entirety. The sixteenth-century reformer, Johannes Agricola, proposed the extreme antinomian position as clearly as possible: "Art thou steeped in sin? [No matter.] If thou believest, thou art in salvation. And all who follow Moses must go to the devil. To the gallows with Moses." Martin Luther was often charged with antinomianism, even though he disputed with Agricola. Because of its emphasis on works, the Epistle of James was "an epistle of straw." As for the Mosaic, "We don't wish to see or hear Moses....They wish to make Jews of us through Moses, but we shall not." Or, as Luther's follower, Philip Melanchthon, put it in an amazing marriage of circumspect tone and revolutionary utterance, "It must be admitted that the Decalogue is abrogated." While not suggesting that Luther was an antinomian, I grasp the nature of the suspicion.

Is my psychopathic saint, then, an antinomian? Well, not quite; but it really doesn't matter. For the distance between formal antinomianism (good works not binding upon those of true *gnosis* and exaggerated spiritual status) and the psychopathic saint (who shows true spiritual worth through abomination, practicing a perversion of anti-Pauline doctrine as it were, earning salvation through bad works!) is a mark of their proximity. Ethical behavior, OK for *hoi polloi*, is not binding on them: perish the crude thought. And although neither antinomian nor holy sinner is endorsed by *doctrine*, they are, no matter how offensive the thought, within the *tradition*. But even so, they would have shriveled unto death without nourishment. And the nourishment lay in the great "good news" itself of Christianity: *Mercy*, in the dispensing of which, according to Greene's priest, God is appallingly strange.

But I don't want to rest upon a "genealogy" of sorts, for I suspect that even had gnosticism not survived its death as heresy, the psychopathic saint would still have been imagined by someone responsive to what I can only call a rich and perilously fertile atmosphere in Christianity. How to put it?

Consider the hoary question of theodicy: Why evil in the creation of a benevolent Creator? Rather than ascribe to evil an autonomous and competitive essence (as the Manichees would), we should see, said Augustine, that apparently discrete evils have a place in the "splendor of the providential order" and "contribute to our benefit, if we make wise and appropriate use of them. Even poisons, which are disastrous when improperly used, are turned into wholesome medicine by their proper application" (*City of God*, XI, 22). Granted, in this particular passage Augustine speaks specifically of mundane distresses of the mortal flesh, it is nonetheless hard to avoid suspicions that such apparently innocent good sense is actually nothing less than an

Catholic Intellectuals & Conservative Politics in America 1950–1985

"[An] insightful study.... While tracing ideological shifts among proponents of conservatism, Allitt describes a parallel fragmentation among all Catholics over such issues as civil rights, family roles, and church authority."—*Publishers Weekly*
$29.95

Patrick Allitt

At bookstores, or call 607–277–2211
(credit card orders only)

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
Sage House • 512 East State Street • Ithaca NY 14850

Benedictine Maledictions

LITURGICAL CURSING IN ROMANESQUE FRANCE

&

Lester K. Little

Officially sanctioned religious cursing? Little tells the surprising story of a time in medieval France when monastic communities held religious services in which they intoned maledictions against their enemies. $31.50

At bookstores, or call 607–277–2211
(credit card orders only)

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
Sage House • 512 East State Street • Ithaca NY 14850

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ambitious effort, in defense of doctrines of divine omnipotence, to incorporate the enemy as paradoxical agent in order to have it all. Probably no question has exercised the perplexed so much as "Why does God allow it?" no matter how often the theological intellect answers "It's part of the divine plan." And some excited souls might be expected to fix upon "Even poisons...."

But even without such heady questions, Christianity is fantastically rich in possibilities, ambiguities, poetic resonances; appeals to blind faith (Take the leap!); violations of it; dismissals of reason (Murder the Whore Intellect!); dependence on it. For some, it is a faith which, although posterior to Judaism, seems somehow the elder—Sumerian, Eleusinian, Egyptian, almost—with its sacrificial God and eucharistic mysteries. Candor compels an appeal to memories: a church at night is a spooky sight to a child, and the child is right. There *can be* something unnerving, given the receptive mood, about a faith whose central symbol is not a scroll but a figure nailed to a cross.

For some, Christianity is an endless source of the astonishing, sometimes a great deal less comforting than it is supposed to be, more obscure, disturbing, dark, and dangerous...and/but for all that, oddly compelling and intoxicating. (Does this sound confessional?) It is, for one thing, an elaborate celebration of mystery (not only *The* Mystery), a recognition that things are not necessarily what they appear, a conviction that paradox is not only a rhetorical strategy but an ontological condition. Even without its theodicean tendencies, Christianity is the most ambitious faith there ever has been—which isn't to belittle the Hebraic visions of the Old Testament, for the accomplishment of monotheism was an enormous task, as was the establishment of a law "unto all the nations." But Christian ambition! Its catholicity: by which I don't mean only its horizontal universalism. Trinitarianism is a catholicism much more encompassing than geography. God a father, a spiritual essence, and a son: the heavenly reaches, the numinous, the mundane, all enclosed within one concept. The *totaliter aliter* or Wholly Other mixed with the familiar. Sometimes it seems to me Christianity says to the world: Give me your tired and huddled masses of certainties, ambiguities, clarities, contradictions yearning to be One.

Now these evocations of an atmosphere are meant to attest to an explosive potency in Christianity far beyond the worship of God and the necessities of the soul—but the explosive can't always be kept within the boundaries meant to contain it, no more than it could be in Paul's unique but considerable corner of Christianity. Perhaps if Christianity had managed to be a *small* world view, say roughly the size (and interestingness) of pragmatism, there would be no problem; but such is not the case. This rich atmosphere matters enormously to some minds. And in some of those to which it matters there's a sort of "fermentation." The literary imagination is a fictive one, of course: it makes things up. It's also a responsive imagination: it picks things up. Such as—as I put it upon beginning—"an odd moral ambivalence in the Christian mechanics of mercy." And if it interprets that oddity as "a certain imaginative relation between criminality and grace," that need not be a scandalous attempt to shock the faithful and entertain the profane. It is, I think, the artist's employment of perspective by incongruity, so much braver than the critic's, to reveal the darker possibilities in the good news of revelation.

But for all the fevered bravery of imagination, Christianity remains the religion of Mercy. Those theologians who presume to an economical regulation of mercy's currents remain something of an embarrassment: John Calvin, for instance, whom even Presbyterians don't like to mention too often, least of all during missionary campaigns. At the other extreme: Rose, the enamored of Greene's Pinkie Brown, would rather be damned than saved if Pinkie is not to be saved. The priest likens her to a "holy man [who] lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation....This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too....I don't know, my child, but some people think he was—well, a saint." And then: "You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone—the...appalling...strangeness of the mercy of God." And then: "The church does not demand that we believe any soul is cut off from salvation."

I am appropriately moved. But at the same time, I am resistant. For while I don't doubt the saintliness of the man the priest speaks of, I have a hard time with a faith so spendthrift of mercy that it cannot assure us that "Dr. Jemand von Niemand," with his peers and masters, is of a certainty roasting in hell. □

Mark Gunn

The Altar in Saint Peter's Basilica

Good Friday, 1993

They built it in the center
instead of at the head. Spires root
into the dust freckled air,
spires of twisting gold, spires
that are really pillars, not spires
at all. They support nothing
but the weight of the piety thick air,
the prayer heavy air that hugs
an altar of black and gold. Beneath,
an ashen center, a riddled pith,
an archaic trope. The sign says (in Latin)
this is the grave of the Rock
of the Church. Stone steps trickle down
to it, locked off by iron gates
to protect the tomb from assassins,
tourists, unbelievers. I'll say it:
I believe. I believe Saint Peter
holds up the great walls of a faith
with the grisly embers of his heart,
with a crux he denied the existence of
almost two thousand years ago today.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THERE'S GOD IN THE MUCK OF LIFE

MAKING POEMS, SCHOOLING CHILDREN

NED O'GORMAN

I do not know exactly what might have been a call in my life, from whatever meddling source. I have not known voices, nor have I known any exact, single incident when I thought I might have been poked by a divine finger. I am an ordinary believer and I do not expect God to bring me, on some celestial tray, his calling card.

It is all a matter, and has always been so, of just what kind of Roman Catholic I am, just what kind of a poet I am. Something in the past years has remained steadfast and absolute and radiant in common sense and that has been the church. Not the church embroiled in endless battles in its quest for temporal power. I have not the slightest doubt that God in his immense wit and glory cannot but be displeased with Rome's fateful simplicities. Any call I might have felt came from that fundamental belief that Christ Jesus did live upon this gritty earth and that he was the son of God and that his mother was the Virgin Mary and that he did establish a church. I believe utterly and without demur or edginess the entire Nicene Creed and have found it a splendid and delightful thing to believe. I believe in judgment, sin, free will, and in the mysterious and volatile thrust of the Holy Spirit through the universe and through my obdurate blood.

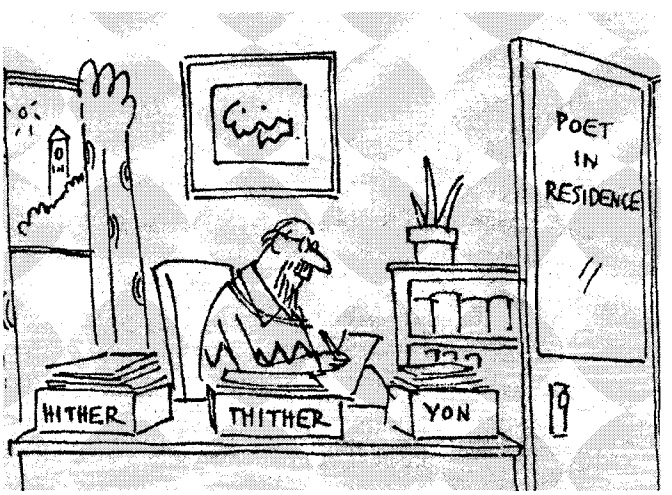
I was always aware of the existence in the daily comings and goings of my life of the presence of the divine. As I moved toward the darkness I was pulled away from it and as I moved against the light I knew that I was pulled toward it. Grace at work is an eternal activity within man and cannot be shut down. I battle against disorder and build something that possesses form and meaning. Those are my poems. I gravitate toward chaos and something brings me back from it and gives me a construction I can see: my poems. I may flail about in the darkness and draw the darkness about me and make it part of my being but at the edges of the dark is the light of grace and suddenly in tides of glory the darkness is swept away. Everything I have done, each thing I have begun and finished, each creature I have loved is within the immensity of God's benevolence and within the sound of his voice.

I wonder if these speculations are an intrusion on the purpose of this essay. I cannot reflect on my work or on my life until I make it clear where I am in my little universe. The church and my poetry were, no doubt, heading me somewhere. I was being pulled toward some landscape where I could settle down and find work. I could have married. I was, more or less, suitable, but it seemed unwise always to establish limits. I could have taught but the thought of the academic village and its boundaries bothered me. I would have drunk too much there and written bad poetry. I could have gone into the diplomatic corps, and I tried for three months the rigors of monastic life. I was beginning to wander and I did not want to end my life as my aristocratic French uncles did, dead in some sordid place unnoticed by the mice or the constabulary.

I needed something to consume me. Poetry did, and it still is the thing I do best, but it did not submerge. It did not lay me waste. It did not exhaust me. I needed to do a task that spent all my soul's powers and let me *do* something besides.

I was born with a thin skin. I was a terrible son to a dramatic and mad father. Father and I spoke only when we spoke of horses. I collected shells and rocks and spent the happiest hours of my childhood sitting on the topmost branch of a tree reading and writing down lists of words I thought beautiful. I was a recluse from the beginning, and though I was never strange and moldy in my sensibilities, I could have become peculiar and unmanageable.

Something had to happen to gather in the loose ends, and during my college years I got to know Dorothy Day, who worked with the dispossessed on the Bowery. She saw in the poor the reflection of the Incarnate God and found what she saw radi-



NED O'GORMAN, *a poet, is the founder of the Children's Storefront, a school in Harlem.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ant with humanity and divine intimations. So the thin-skinned recluse drifted down to the Catholic Worker house on Christie Street and found there brothers and sisters, folk who were outcast and desperate. I saw in their state my state. They searched for a life that had slipped by them in the darkness of their lives, and I was always on the edge of losing it all to distractions of every kind: sex, liquor, poetry, sloth, and reckless ways with money.

I was being called to Harlem though then, in 1955, during my time at the Catholic Worker, I did not have an inkling about anything but the marvelous present and its way of burning away at my feelings and urging me on toward disaster and discovery.

God, I think, wished that I would get on with it and come to the place where I could work with his outcasts. I only understood them; I never understood my parents or my sisters or my friends. I had not yet found a place where I could "be." I was a wanderer and when I arrived in Harlem in 1966 it became the locus—I could stay there, labor there, write poetry there, and build something that might be pleasing to God.

If the substance of these reflections is obscure, it is because the whole progress of my life has always been obscure. I never had a plan and I have never thought ahead. The thinking and planning were being done by the presence in me of a divine urging and I could only respond to it in the darkness. In Harlem I was a broom, a shovel, a small bulldozer getting the place ready, making something occur, but I knew it was the Lord who handled it all. I was gathering up the pieces and setting them up in a construction of hope. In twenty-eight years I was building a school: the Children's Storefront School that enrolls children from preschool through the eighth grade to give them a healing, liberating, and vibrant academic life. All of our children come from the oppressed environment of racist America and our tasks are monumental, but I sense glory and joy and freedom all about me. I am a poet, a builder; I make things, simply that, poems, a school—and hope they hold together. □

SCREEN

ALL'S ILL THAT ENDS WELL

'REALITY BITES' & 'THE SNAPPER'

Humbug and self-humbug are indispensable to comedy. In fact, it's hard to name a comedy or farce that doesn't have some manner of fraud near its core. But no matter how devious or gullible characters are, their creator must remain undeceived or there is no comedy. Malvolio can kid himself into thinking that he's God's gift to women but *Twelfth Night* would have crumbled into incoherence if Shakespeare had bought into the steward's fantasy. Chaplin's decline as a comic genius begins in *Limelight* precisely because he becomes infatuated with his own hero. Comic fools may sigh over themselves but their creators must cast a cold eye.

What's wrong with *Reality Bites* is that its creators, particularly scriptwriter Helen Childress, are misty-eyed. They are convinced that their characters have unfathomed depths but the moviegoer can't wade out of the shallows.

The movie deals with what happens to a bunch of kids just out of college during their searches for work and love. The most important character (Winona Ryder) is doing a stint as a TV intern while putting together a video about the aims and aimlessness of her generation. She and her roommate (Janeane Garafola) acquire a couple of unwanted male boarders, and between one of them (a rocker played by Ethan Hawke) and Ryder some erotic tension develops. Then Ryder takes a cable TV executive (Ben Stiller, *Reality*'s director) as her lover and everything heads toward a sexual showdown. Fair enough material for a romantic comedy, but the creators of this one seem to think that they're carrying the standard for Generation X.

Take, for instance, the putative filmmaking talent of the Ryder character. The turning point of the movie comes when the executive, having optioned Ryder's documentary for his M.T.V.-type network, tarts the video up with a lot of editing and computer-graphic clichés. Ryder's outrage at this helps propel her from Stiller's arms into Hawke's. This is believable enough but the filmmakers have made a dreadful mistake: they let us see much of Ryder's documentary. It's limp, boring, utterly amateurish. It actually *benefits* from the commercial butchery. But only we see this. Director Stiller and scriptwriter Childress really seem to think that an artist has been betrayed and that therefore she is right to throw her yuppie lover over for the feckless but pure rock poet.

But he's another problem. Ethan Hawke gives a perfectly plausible performance in the movie's first half as that sort of young man who has cultivated an air of bored disdain as an announcement of his incorruptibility. He's the latest version of Jimmy Porter, exposer of phonies in *Look Back in Anger*. Trouble is, when this guy comes out with lines such as "I got this arcane glimpse of the universe" and "There's a planet of regret on my shoulders," we may begin to wonder who's the real phony. True, Childress has written some scenes in which Hawke is chided for—guess what—not committing himself. But then the musician's father dies offstage, the lad undergoes a spiritual conversion (also offstage), the lovers clinch, soft rock music cozies onto the soundtrack, the camerawork goes soft focus, and All Is Well. No, this is not a movie that can afford to sneer at the clichés of TV.

But it's not a total waste of time. Stiller shows, in the less drippy portions of the script, that he can direct. He's particularly clever at changing the composition of his shots without cutting by skillfully moving the actors about within a fixed camera set-up. When done well, this method gives a loose, Sunday-afternoon feeling to the material that helps conceal the script's manipulations.

And the two female leads are delightful. Janeane Garafola has chunky attractiveness and campy wit. Winona Ryder is a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

latterday Daisy Miller, and if only this unlacquered beauty were *allowed* to play the James heroine then those of us exposed to the dreadful Peter Bogdanovich version of twenty years ago could forget Cybill Shepherd forever. When the roommates hear a song they like in a convenience store and break into spontaneous dance at the cash register, you may fall a bit in love with them. Perhaps the scene works simply because you're allowed to fall in love instead of being badgered into it by filmmakers cooing over their cinematic progeny.

If you're looking for a perfect example of a comedy that deals with self-deception without being tainted by it, check out *The Snapper*. This is an adaptation of the second installment of Roddy Doyle's Barrytown trilogy, a comic epic of life as it's lived in the streets and overcrowded houses of northern Dublin. The first novel, *The Commitments*, has already been unforgettably filmed by Alan Parker, but *The Snapper* isn't far behind as directed by the impressively versatile Stephen Frears from Doyle's own script. In Frears's work, there has always been a mixture of grit and quicksilver. You can almost smell the rooms his characters live in, yet the spring-heeled editing always keeps the naturalism from congealing. In *The Snapper*, the dirt of life is leavened by wisecracks and scraps of dreams.

The deception here is perpetrated by unmarried, twenty-year-old Sharon Curley when she becomes pregnant by a middle-aged married man during one of her periodic drunken bouts. She's quite ready to announce her condition to family and friends but isn't willing to declare who got her that way. At first, she simply doesn't remember, but when she finally does, she can't abide the fact that she had sex with such a drip. Never mind that dad and mum would think, how would she look her girlfriends in the eye? So she invents a one-night stand with a Spanish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sailor. Or was he Portuguese? Or Greek? Or....Anyway, he was dark. And romantic.

The truth slips out, or at least half out, when the beat-the-clock lover starts boasting to his drinking buddies. Sharon manages to shut him up but then must deal with the brushfire of gossip. What helps her is that her invention is so much more attractive than reality to a neighborhood that is starved for glamour. Her girlfriends sigh over her romantic exploit and compare it to *Letter to Brezhnev* (the popular British film about a girl who takes a Russian sailor as a lover). Her father, Dessie, sarcastically sings "Popeye, the Sailor Man," as his daughter and her ballooning belly waddle past him in the kitchen, but he too would rather believe his daughter than deal with the real father, a man he's always dismissed as a nerd. In fact, nobody completely believes Sharon's lie but few completely dismiss it, either. *The Snapper* nearly becomes a study in communal self-deception.

But what's truly funny about the movie is the way reality keeps breaking into every situation. Not the "reality" of serious drama à la Arthur Miller and William Inge, with their dark home-truths wrung from the soul in the midst of Oedipal warfare, but the ongoing reality we all deal with every day, the mess of life, its pettiness, its squalor, its stubborn refusal to become high drama or significance or anything other than mess. Trying to take in the news of his daughter's pregnancy, Dessie (done to blustery perfection by Colm Meaney) finds himself playing traffic cop as the rest of his family troops by on the way to school or work. Bracing himself for a fist fight with some tormentors in a pub, Dessie finds himself in the midst of a brawl when everybody jumps into the act. The father of the baby dramatically leaves his family in order to declare his true love for Sharon but gets left with egg on his face in the middle of a shopping mall when he learns that his "true love" thinks he's a creep.

What isn't so funny in *The Snapper*, and isn't meant to be funny, is the feeling of being at the mercy of one's neighbors and friends. Through Sharon's eyes, we sometimes see her girlfriends as young, cackling hags who feed their soap opera imaginings on her misfortune. Dessie often regards his pub mates as small-time Iagos, and there's always a next-door neighbor ready with a sarcastic crack or sneer. Talk all you want about global villages or information superhighways, in Barrytown everyone knows which village really matters. It's the one right outside the window. Unlike *The Commitments*, which found vitality and even kindness in every corner of Doyle's world, *The Snapper*, a more claustrophobic film, portrays the neighborhood as a trap. If you accept the way it defines you, you're sunk.

Conversely, the family situation in *The Snapper*, for all its noise and mess, is portrayed more lovingly than in *The Commitments*. Precisely because the world outside is so ready to judge and sneer, it is only in the family that a person can get support and even a chance to grow. This is most true for Dessie, who, after getting past his anger, becomes a kinder father, a joyfully expectant grandparent, and, comically yet believably, a better lover to his wife when he stumbles upon some sex tips in the back of a prenatal handbook. RICHARD ALLEVA

MEDIA

DOWNHILL & SLIPPERY

CBS GOES TO THE OLYMPICS

It's Saturday, February 26, 1994, and last night in Lillehammer Nancy Kerrigan got a silver medal, Tonya Harding did—uh, *something*—and CBS picked up a record 48.5 share of the viewing audience—which is, like, they wake you up and force you to watch the show. Ever since Nancy got whacked at the nationals, America had been in breath-bated expectation of the Showdown in Norway; and as, over the ensuing weeks, it became clear that everybody in Tonya's circle, except maybe Tonya herself and maybe her fourth-grade piano teacher, was in on the whacking, the anticipation was all-consuming. Come on: could any other story have shunted Michael Jackson into the slow lane of the information superhighway?

Don't worry; this isn't another Tonya-and-Nancy piece. It isn't even a piece about sports. I don't like sports. I leave the den when they start skating because I can't bear to see anybody fall on his or her butt. I never learned to swim, so for me *Jaws* is a they-go-in-the-water-they-get-what-they-deserve movie. Watching base- or any other kind of ball I find about as exhilarating as reading the letters of William James, if that's not unfair to William James. Chess and straight pool; those are my sports, because with them, you can drink and smoke *while* you play the game.

This is, however, a piece about the idea of sport, which has obsessed me for years, perhaps just because I am so metaphysically unathletic; and about how bad was the CBS coverage of the 1994 Olympics.

"How does it feel to be the players' favorite sandwich?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They cleaned up, of course. The network simply obliterated its competition during the games. Because the modern Olympics is, let's face it, a cash cow of cosmic dimensions, as non-un-watchable as and only a little less overhyped than the Super Bowl or the Academy Awards. Nancy/Tonya aside, once every four years Americans get all dewy-eyed about things like luge, which is basically you lie on your back on a cafeteria tray and slide down a mountain of ice. And what about the two-man luge? An intrinsic evil, as far as I can make out.

But why this quadrennial passion about events that, othertimes, don't even make prime time on the cable channels? Blame it on Karl Marx. It was the cold war that made the games. The reasoning was, though nobody made it explicit, that since we couldn't really nuke the Evil Empire we could sure whup them pesky Commies on the slopes, on the ice, wherever. And now the Berlin Wall is down, the Evil Empire has decayed back into a tossed salad of internecine, medieval hatreds, and the song is over: but the malady lingers on.

And you can whiff the profit-motive like garlic in a Pizza Hut. Ask the truly sublime Kati Witt if, when she skated for the GDR in 1988, she wasn't thinking about the perks that would come with a gold medal. Ask any of the top contenders if, as they practice, visions of Wheaties boxes don't dance in their heads. Sister Harding deserves some kind of medal for saying, long before the Nancywhacking, that she wanted the gold because it meant Big Bucks. Honesty can be bracing.

The claim of the modern Olympics, with its billion-dollar panoply of advertising and endorsement deals, to be a selfless and idealistic international competition is, if such a thing can be, a charming and rather sweet hypocrisy: sort of like your always-snockered maiden aunt who insists that she only occasionally takes a sherry before dinner. This year, though, things tipped over the edge: badly. On the next-to-last day of coverage, CBS Sports President Neal Pilson, talking about the first, Thursday night skateoff between you-know-who and you-know-who, announced: "I don't think if we sat down to try to script an Olympics we would have done much better....I think this is as good as any fiction could be."

Exactly. Alas.

What distinguishes a game from a fiction is that you can't make a game turn out the way you want it to. And that's very important. Both games and fictions, of course, are artificial versions of that sloppy monster, Life: they're ordered contests or quests we impose upon the stuff of just living, day-to-day. And I think, as a species, we need them both, and need them desperately.

But they don't mix. I assume that our hairier and harried ancestors played games (rock, scissors, and paper, maybe) before they told stories (the guy who killed the saber-toothed tiger, probably). Because the game is, psychically, at the midpoint between the monster Life and the benevolent angel Fiction (or myth or story or what you will). Like fiction, it is controlled, with rules and closure. Like life, it is chancy and, in the words of the philosopher Yogi Berra, not over till it's over. Chess or mudwrestling, makes no nevermind: the game catches both the sense of order that life misses and the sense of the unforeseen that fiction lacks. When Homer and Virgil took so much time to describe the funeral games of fallen warriors, they were in fact, as aboriginal storytellers, nodding toward the one, crucial transitional stage between the chaos of being and the certainties of myth.

And now listen again to brother Pilson on the Olympics: "I think this is as good as any fiction could be."

What CBS did was *orchestrate* the games. We were all treated to lengthy segments on what skier's or luger's or bobsledder's mother or brother or kitten had recently passed away. We were shown, at length, Connie Chung, who is to journalism what Lawrence Welk is to jazz, asking intrusive and insulting questions of Tonya Harding. We were given, in short, the Olympics, which at least used to pretend to be a sporting event, as a miniseries.

Do we have the right to examine not just the performance, but the background, the parentage, the internal lives of the contenders—or isn't that detritus better left for "Geraldo" and "Oprah"? Neal Pilson, apparently, thinks it's all just groovy: as good as any fiction could be, hey?

One thing I've tried to do in these columns is argue for how TV can be good. But in this case, I think this was really bad. CBS turned what could have been a neutral event into a ten-day freakshow. They trivialized the efforts of a lot of earnest, self-possessed young men and women by making their struggles "as good as any fiction could be." And in Tonya Harding's last skate, that nightmare, it-is-to-slit-your-throat concatenation of disasters, as she was hyperventilating and weeping and panic-strickenly trying to find a right-size lace backstage, the CBS cameras were firmly, unrelentingly, and unremittingly focused on her agony. I don't care if she did know about the Nancywhacking: nobody deserves that.

FRANK McCONNELL

BECOME A 1994 ASSOCIATE

COMMONWEAL ASSOCIATES
15 Dutch Street, New York, N.Y. 10038

Benefactors	$1,000	Charter	$125
Supporters	$500	Sustaining	$50
Patrons	$250		

Full amount enclosed.
Half enclosed; remind me of the balance in 6 months.
(Memberships are tax deductible.)

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Can this marriage be saved?

CATHOLICISM AND LIBERALISM
Edited by R. Bruce Douglass and David Hollenbach
Cambridge University Press, $59.95, 368 pp.

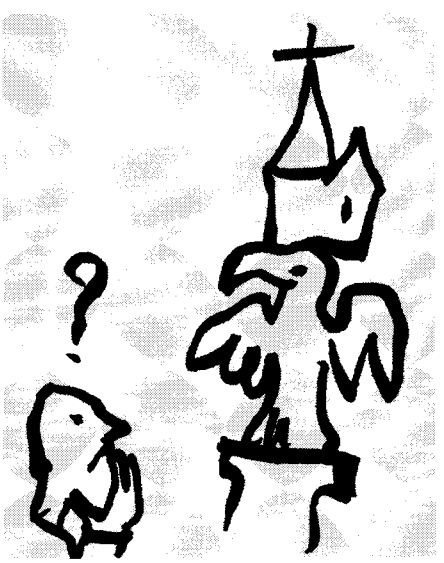
John T. Noonan

In any actual war the persons easiest to kill are one's own allies; but killing of this kind occurs only by mistake. It is different in ideological warfare. There the easiest targets are those closest to one's own positions, and for three reasons they are the ones most often shot. First, it relieves frustration. The real foe is too hard to reach and penetrate; but these at hand are vulnerable. Second, it is a matter of logic. Those who question one aspect of your position may be shown to question one of your premises. If they were logical they would either abandon their difference with you or enlarge upon it, soon arriving by inexorable steps in the enemy camp. Logically, they are suspect. Third, their lack of logic translates into a lack of loyalty. If they were truly committed to your cause, they would not cultivate a slightly distinct position. At heart they must be traitorous. Their existence certainly encourages the enemy. For all these reasons, better to shoot them now.

This dialectic, of which the course of the French Revolution and the Bolshevik movement are spectacular examples where the shooting was not metaphorical, has also been experienced analogously by those Catholics who, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, have sought to reconcile the authority of the church with the liberty of the individual conscience. Their history and their reasoning are the subject of this valuable book.

Félicité de Lamennais may be taken as the first and most unhappy example of this species. A dedicated priest, whose *apologia* for Catholicism met a rousing success in a France recovering from the revolution, he dared, in a journal prophetically named *L'Avenir* (*The Future*), to celebrate the union of Catholicism with democracy, including religious liberty. His views were politically objectionable to autocrats such as Metternich, and partly under their influence, but partly for the three reasons already mentioned, his position was anathema to Pope Gregory XVI. The result was *Mirari vos*, an encyclical repudiating *L'Avenir*'s ideas and declaring liberty of conscience "a madness."

Lamennais, mortally wounded, left the church. His basic insights, however, were maintained by Lacordaire, the restorer of the Dominican order in France; by Montalembert, the leader of enlightened Catholic politics in France; and above all by Alexis de Tocqueville, whose *Democracy in America* informed Americans about what they had but was primarily intended to instruct his own compatriots and coreligionists about what they should have. Over a century later, Lamennais's proposition was revived by John Courtney Murray and, although Murray was silenced at first, the church in the Second Vatican Council wholeheartedly embraced the right of every human person to the free exercise of religion.



The ultimate triumph within the church of the most basic liberal idea makes all the sadder "the failed encounter" of nineteenth-century Catholicism and liberalism that Peter Steinfels feelingly describes in the opening essay of this book. The triumph also removed the tension between the American ideal and the ideal Catholic state which Paul Blanshard exploited so successfully and whose course Philip Gleason perceptively portrays in the account that follows Steinfels's. The triumph at Vatican II is celebrated by Joseph Komonchak. Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre could not believe what was happening. Philosophically, as Paul Sigmund here points out, the major work had already been accomplished by Jacques Maritain.

Of course, as these authors are aware, there are many definitions of liberalism, and more aspects to it than the rights of conscience. As economic theory it encourages a *laissez-faire* that the church has never accepted. As a political doctrine it can degenerate into a selfish individualism inattentive to the common good. Focused on autonomy, liberalism has difficulty dealing with the complex interrelationships of the family. The corrective force of Catholic social doctrine in these areas is brought out by other essayists here, among them Louis Dupré, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and David Hollenbach. Liberalism, it has always seemed to its Catholic friends, needs a larger vision of human possibilities, a stronger social conscience, an awareness that truth and justice, essential as they are, do not exhaust the values required for communal life. This book eloquently points to the complements that liberals could find in Catholicism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Catholicism to be attractive to those who see it from outside, it must conform its own practices to the commitment to conscience that in theory it has proclaimed. James Provost sets out the halting steps that have been taken and candidly observes that the church "has yet to come to grips" with the problem. The church "must always be reformed," said Tertullian. The work of internal renovation remains.

"We're the good guys," the Catholic liberals have been saying for about two hundred years. "You can trust us. We're not the people who burned Savanarola, Hus, Joan, and Latimer." The Catholic liberals are utterly sincere, but they have as their companions in the faith those whose mental set is not so different from the inquisitors'. Headed by Newman, the liberals are not a small or marginal band. Vatican II was their council. But the world of *The Future* has not been fully realized yet. □

A MARRIAGE OF TRUE MINDS

THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY
The Marriage of Diana and Lionel Trilling
Diana Trilling
Harcourt, Brace and Company, $24.95, 442 pp.

Stephanie Harrington

In *The Beginning of the Journey*, Diana Trilling observes that, alone among all those who have written about Lionel Trilling, Louis P. Simpson, an editor of the *Southern Review*, "has usefully addressed himself to Lionel's ambitions as a writer of fiction" and his despairing disappointment at having earned his literary place as a critic, not a novelist. Picking up on a envious reference to Ernest Hemingway in Lionel's journal, Simpson perceived that "Trilling did not have, and had never had, the Bohemian option" so flamboyantly exercised by Hemingway "of exposing his life 'without dignity'...." Remarkably, Diana Trilling's memoir exposes much about her forty-six-year marriage without sacrificing a shred of dignity—hers or Lionel's.

She accomplishes this with a knack for storytelling and, despite the fact that her impaired eyesight required her to dictate the text, an elegant, elliptical prose that allows her to deal imperturbably with her subject, even though that subject is herself and her husband and intimate details of their life together. Even when she indulges in settling scores, it is with the back of a gloved hand, as in her incidental reference to a dinner at Mary McCarthy's, also attended by Virgil Thomson: It was fortunate, she notes, that she, who had studied voice, and the composer "found much to talk about, because Mary...concentrated the whole of her attention on Lionel and excluded me from the evening. 'What makes an intelligent woman suppose that the way to attract a man is to be rude to his wife?' Lionel later pondered." Of Dwight MacDonald, she remarks, "Nothing was easier than to be angry at MacDonald, whether in or out of print, but it was difficult to stay angry with him; he was too seemingly innocent. Certainly he was innocent of the consequences of his ideas."

There is nothing arch, however, about the honesty with which she opens up such punishing terrain as her nearly paralyzing struggle with agoraphobia; Lionel's periodic depressions, during which he would lash out at her as the ruination of his life; the prevalent sexism among the intellectual elite then that led both women and men to keep her in her place as Lionel's wife and not acknowledge her own critical accomplishments, in which Lionel, himself, took such pleasure; the disabling inhibitions implanted by ambiguous, troubled relations with their parents and siblings; and a history of psychoanalysis that would be hilarious had it not been so harrowing and that leaves the reader marveling that its victims could resist digging up Freud's body and pump-

***catholic eye** is . . .*

"... gloriously spirited... commended to those inclined to a fighting faith, of whatever denomination . . ."
—Wm. F. Buckley, Jr.

Find out all about ***catholic eye*** for yourself—just use the handy coupon below to get it now—risk-FREE (your money back in full, no questions asked, if *you* are not fully satisfied, OK?).

If you admire Pope John Paul II—and you're fed up with all the "Catholic bashing" going on in the media—in short, if you are a conservative Catholic, then ***catholic eye*** is for *you*. There's nothing else like it—***eye*** sees all!—you get the facts and inside information you just can't find anywhere else, boiled down into a fast-reading newsletter, *perfect* for busy people (Who has *time* to read all the Catholic news?—***eye*** covers it all *for* you!).

All you need do is *try* it now by taking advantage of this no-risk offer: pay only the regular $34.95 rate (a bargain—most newsletters cost *much* more, as you know) and read two or three issues—*one* won't give you the full flavor—then *you* decide. It's as simple as that. Don't miss this opportunity: fill out and return the coupon right now, before you get distracted, or whatever. You'll be glad you did!

*N.B.: **catholic eye** is published by The National Committee of Catholic Laymen, Inc., a non-profit organization of conservative (read "papal-loyalist") Catholic Americans.*

catholic eye
150 East 35 Street • N. Y., New York 10016

Gentlemen: *Yes,* I do want to try ***catholic eye*** for myself—please send me the current issue right now [We will: ***eye*** always comes to you *via* first-class mail—What's worse than an *old* newsletter?]. I understand that if, after trying a few issues, I *don't* agree with Mr. Buckley, you will refund my money *in full*, no questions asked [We will, *guaranteed*].

☐ I enclose my payment of $34.95 herewith. (Sorry: we cannot bill you—but we will add *two extra FREE bonus issues*—you'll get 14 in all if you take us up on this no-risk-to-you offer today!)

Name _____
(please print)
Address _____
City _____
State _____ **Zip** _____
CW1
Just make your check payable to ***catholic eye***.
Return this handy coupon to the address above.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing it full of the Prozac of that time.

But, far from offering an hermetic exercise in self-examination, Ms. Trilling takes us on a journey through the cultural and political landscape inhabited by the New York intellectuals during the three decades between 1920 and 1950—a journey taken with companions like McCarthy, MacDonald, James Agee, Randall Jarrell, Jacques Barzun, *Partisan Review* editors William Phillips and Philip Rahv, Sherwood Anderson, Alan Ginsberg, *Commentary*'s founding editor Elliot Cohen, Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, Whittaker Chambers, etc., etc., etc. Among the most unforgettable of Ms. Trilling's recollections is a visit from Whittaker Chambers—a visit to her, not Lionel. "He came to ask me for help in his spying operation for the Soviet Union. He had been waiting for Lionel to leave the house" and "instead of taking the elevator...he had walked up the back stairs so as not to be seen. In one degree or another everyone who seeks personal or social salvation in communism is pursuing an illusion, but Chambers brought an added dimension to the quest....Chambers promptly stated the business on which he had come to see me; he wanted me to receive mail for him. In spy language, he was asking me to be his 'drop'....From the start of our conversation, I knew that I was not going to do what he asked of me. Yet I was enormously flattered that...this man of two worlds...believed me to be enough courageous to be a semi-spy."

Though the Trillings were never Communist party members, Diana did work for a Communist front organization, the Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners. Ironically, it was Sidney Hook, who later achieved such notable paroxysms of anticommunism, who converted the Trillings to "the new revolutionary faith," brief though their novitiate was to be. At the end of one year, having discovered that a fund-raising letter she was instructed to send out with her own signature was fraudulent and made her vulnerable to federal prosecution, Diana quit the CDPP, and feeling utterly betrayed, she and Lionel became unapologetic and vociferous anti-Stalinist liberals. "It was not easy, through all these years," she writes, to be "an anti-Communist without sacrifice of liberal principle" and it is "even more difficult now that neoconservatism of the extreme Right claims so many anti-Communists."

To the suggestion that Lionel's anti-communism spawned the neoconservative ideology, such as it is, she responds: "While I, no more than anyone else, am able to say beyond a reasonable dispute what would have been the direction of Lionel's politics if he had lived into the decade of the eighties, I am of the firmest belief that he would have spoken out against this outcome of the anti-Communist position." Indeed, in 1965, when Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell launched their magazine, *The Public Interest*, Kristol asked the Trillings to be its joint literary editors. But, she says, "Even then we were reluctant to associate ourselves with his generally conservative stance and we did not accept the offer." And, in the 1972 Nixon-McGovern presidential race, when the neoconservatives began testing the mainstream waters, the Trillings refused a request by the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb (to whom Kristol is married) that they join disenchanted Democrats in signing a pro-Nixon advertisement in the *New York Times*. The Trillings and the Kristols had been friends for many years, so Ms. Trilling writes of her "enduring regret our political disagreement has all but ended the relationship...."

In her preface, Ms. Trilling tells us that one reason for writing this book was that, in the likely eventuality that others should essay biographies of either or both of the Trillings, she "wanted the undertaking to be more solidly rooted in truth than was likely were the biographer dependent on existing sources." Those among us whose near and dear may also invite biographical attention may well rue not having had Diana Trilling's foresight. □

WEDDING KNELLS

ROAD TO DIVORCE
England 1530-1987
Lawrence Stone
Oxford University Press, $35, 460 pp.

UNCERTAIN UNIONS
Marriage in England 1660-1753
Lawrence Stone
Oxford University Press, $35, 281 pp.

BROKEN LIVES
Separation and Divorce in England 1660-1857
Lawrence Stone
Oxford University Press, $35, 355 pp.

Carl L. Bankston III

With the publication of *Broken Lives*, Lawrence Stone's massive, three-volume study of the making and breaking of marriage in England has reached completion. The first volume, *Road to Divorce*, offers a grand theoretical overview of changes in attitudes toward marriage and divorce during the course of four-and-a-half centuries. In early modern England, for most people there were only two ways to get out of a valid marriage: one's own death or the death of a spouse. By contrast, divorce is expected to end a third of all present-day marriages in England, and half of all marriages in the United States. Stone poses the question, "How did we get this way?" The search for an answer leads him to trace the evolution of divorce through popular attitudes, operations of the courts, parliamentary acts, legal judgments, and statistical fluctuations in the frequency of marriage breakups.

For all of his numbers and tables, though, Stone retains many of the qualities of the old-fashioned narrative historian. He is interested in how the changes affected flesh-and-blood actors, and in how human demands brought about these changes. The second and third volumes, therefore, present case studies that provide the raw

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

material for the explanations in *Road to Divorce*. The cases in *Uncertain Unions* illustrate the ill-defined nature of English marriage before the Marriage Act of 1753. *Broken Lives* offers a similar series of detailed stories that show how individuals attempted to extricate themselves from unhappy partnerships before the Divorce Act of 1857.

England was later than other European countries in reaching a satisfactory legal definition of marriage, and it lagged behind the other Protestant nations in allowing divorce. This made marriage an easy, if ambiguous, state to enter, and a difficult one to leave. Church weddings, following the reading of banns, provided the most definite and indisputable, as well as the most expensive, way of establishing a marriage. But there were cheaper and more convenient ways. Vows before witnesses, written contracts, and clandestine marriages performed quickly, secretly, and inexpensively by shady clergymen could also suffice.

The Commonwealth, the Puritan government established in 1649 after the English civil war, contributed an added measure of confusion. Puritan opposition to the religious establishment led to the attempt to make the performance, registration, and regulation of marriage an entirely secular affair. The ecclesiastical courts that decided issues of canon law, including questions of marriage and divorce, were abolished in 1646, and Church of England weddings were forbidden in 1653, giving a boost to the practice of clandestine marriages.

This diversity often made it difficult to establish that a valid marriage had, in fact, been enacted, and it offered a *de facto* form of divorce long before actual divorce was commonly available. The ambiguity of early modern unions made it possible to dissolve them by denying that they had ever really existed.

Divorce or separation, like marriage, could take several forms. In the mid-to-late seventeenth century private deeds of separation developed as a result of the temporary abolition of the ecclesiastical court system. Judicial separation in the ecclesiastical courts could be used by wives to improve the financial terms of an existing separation or by husbands to avoid paying alimony to an adulterous wife, and a judicial separation became one of the necessary steps to obtain a parliamentary divorce, a full divorce with right to remarry granted to an individual by an act of Parliament as an exception to the rule of the indissolubility of marriage. The other necessary step was the suit for criminal conversation, or "crim. con.," a civil suit for monetary damages brought by a cuckolded husband against a wife's lover, a commercialization of the marital state that evoked increasing revulsion through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Stone devotes considerable attention to the development of the parliamentary divorce, from the time the power of Parliament to dissolve marriages was first recognized, when a divorce was granted to Lord John Roos in 1670, to the acceptance of divorce as a normal part of English law with the Divorce Reform Act of 1857. He offers statistics to show the steadily increasing number of divorce bills over the entire period and the shift in social composition of those petitioning for acts of divorce, from titled men and landed squires to "richer men of the middling sort," after about 1750. He does not, unfortunately, discuss the broader socioeconomic changes in English society underlying this shift. He does, however, make some interesting observations about the changes in purpose and function of these legislated breakups. He suggests that they began as exceptions to the rule of lifelong marriage, each exception made for the preservation of patrilineal descent of property, usually from the danger of adulterous wives. They ended in collusive arrangements between spouses to allow each to remarry in the pursuit of personal happiness. The author would have done well to pursue this line of thinking further, since these changes in the purpose of divorce point to much more fundamental cultural changes reflected in attitudes toward family life.

It is a bit disappointing to find the century of divorce law reform from 1857 to 1987 hurried through in an epilogue to *Road to Divorce*, given the author's goal of explaining "how we got this way." In accounting for the steady growth in divorces following 1857, moreover, Stone tends to

✠ RUSSIA ✠ ENGLAND ✠ WALES ✠ FRANCE

The Teleios Foundation invites Christians to travel and study together in a way that makes your outer journey a part of your inner, spiritual journey.

✠**Russia: Study Programs** at the St. Petersburg Theological Seminary (Russian Orthodox Church) in St. Petersburg, Russia, explore the life of the Orthodox Church in Russia. ✠ Monthly departures from New York & Seattle - Two weeks from $1895, all-inclusive.

✠**Old France: Provence and Burgundy** with Professor Bailey Young of Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, archaeologist and art historian. An exploration of ancient Christian sites and France's rich contribution to Western Christian spirituality. ✠ May 30 - June 11 $3495

✠**Wales: Explorations of Celtic Spirituality** with Sister Cintra Pemberton, O.S.H., noted retreat leader. Discover the power, richness and beauty of Celtic spirituality. Guest scholars as seminar leaders. ✠ South Wales April 11 - 25 ✠ North Wales June 13 - 27 ✠ South Wales September 5 - 19 $2395

✠**England: The Southern Cathedrals Festival** with Nancy Roth, Episcopal priest & author, Robert Roth, musician & composer, and Paul Alexander, actor & teacher. A journey into English cathedral life and music through the annual choir festival and excursions in the Salisbury area. ✠ July 19 - 30 $3595

➢**Call (800) 835-3467 or Write: The Rev. James C. McReynolds The Teleios Foundation, P.O. Box 7213, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

round up the usual suspects: increases in life expectancy, weakening of traditional systems of social support, and more and better employment for women outside the home. In the second two volumes, the abstract historical patterns blossom into skillful narratives. The historian Simon Schama has defended narrative history with the remark that written narratives "...often correspond to the ways in which historical actors construct events." The gossipy, tabloid quality of Stone's stories about couples is precisely what gives them their value as historical reconstructions of sex and romance seen through the eyes of their times.

The twenty-five stories of *Uncertain Unions* often read like graphic versions of Defoe or Richardson. They are organized into three sections, as illustrations of three themes: courtship and contract, forced marriage, and clandestine marriage. This method of presentation leaves Stone open to the common criticism of case studies: the question of generalizability. Does the attempt of the adventurer Jean-Jacques Fazas to kidnap, drug, and marry an unwilling wealthy widow really show that "between 1675 and 1710 relations between the sexes seem to have been at their most brutal," or is this simply a timeless story of ruthlessness?

While we cannot say how normal or exceptional these accounts are, their detail manages to convey the pressures and prejudices of their times. Lady Bridget Osborne's efforts to establish as valid her clandestine marriage with a common chaplain against the will of her aristocratic family offer a fascinating picture of a human being caught in the rigidity of social hierarchy. The machinations of serial bigamist Constantia Phillips show how a clever woman might scheme to come out ahead in a misogynous system.

Broken Lives lets us eavesdrop on even juicier bits of gossip from centuries past. Since adultery and extremes of cruelty were the most common reasons for seeking divorce before the Divorce Act made it more widely available, these cases have some of the prurient appeal of keyhole peeping. They also offer fascinating insights into the households of the English elite. The omnipresence of servants made them witnesses and potential allies in any marital rift, so that, in divorce cases like that of William and Clara Louisa Middleton, servants might be polarized into two camps, with master and mistress both seeking their testimony.

It remains clear throughout that parliamentary divorces were devised by men for men. In the twenty-year struggle of Lord Salisbury's daughter Emily with her husband, the Earl of Westmeath, the battered wife sought maintenance and child support in chancery, common law, and consistory courts, after the husband had imprisoned her, beaten her, taken her money, and committed numerous acts of adultery. Her ultimate defeat became, in the eyes of fighters for women's rights like Caroline Norton, evidence for the need to introduce a divorce law that could protect the rights of separated women.

Stone's trilogy achieves an impressive blend of social analysis, humane insight, and storytelling. One may carp at some of the numbers in the first volume, since early modern statistics are notoriously unreliable, and one may object that he is too quick to leap to generalizations, such as his claim that parliamentary divorces in the later period were generally collusive. There is also a tendency in the narratives for lawyers to appear in minor, supporting roles, when it is more likely that lawyers were frequently the chief architects of allegations and strategies of defense. But few other historians have so successfully combined analytical and narrative approaches, and few works of history have offered such an intimate and detailed view of the social customs of early modern England.

Still, Stone never manages to provide an entirely satisfying answer to his original question, "how did we get this way?" Questions of causation are usually dealt with most handily by abstract and reductionistic techniques, such as causal diagrams, that attempt to boil the complexity of human life down to a single, rather simple set of theoretical relations. Stone's rich trilogy does not *explain* the modern era's increase in divorce so much as it *describes* this increase. These fascinating reconstructions of English private life make a unique contribution to historical literature, offering readers a profounder understanding of the nature of marriage before the twentieth century and providing a marvelous overview of historical trends in the formation and dissolution of family life. At the end, however, we find ourselves more knowledgeable, but still wondering just what happened to lifelong marriage. □

BRILLIANT VENTRILOQUIST

BOMBER'S LAW
George V. Higgins
Henry Holt and Co., Inc. $22.50, 296 pp.

Robert Worth

"All fiction is gossip," according to crime novelist George V. Higgins, "and the best of it is collected by eavesdropping." That is certainly true of Higgins himself, an ex-federal attorney whose thuggish characters talk circles around the plots that would contain them. Ever since his first novel, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, appeared in 1972, Higgins has been praised for his spectacularly vivid dialogue. And like his literary mentor John O'Hara, he resents the unspoken subtext of such praise: that he can do nothing else. Higgins occupies a curiously vertiginous spot on the literary spectrum. His fiction is too clever, his plots too spare to achieve the bestselling status of other good crime writers like Elmore Leonard and Scott Turow. Yet he will not venture far enough from the cops-and-robbers format to get the serious attention he hopes for. Unlike his more austere forebears in the genre, Higgins will neither apologize for his work (like Graham Greene, who labeled his de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tective novels "entertainments") nor disguise it as something akin to High Seriousness, as did Conrad. For some readers, weary of too many sprawling postmodern fictions, that kind of dogged fidelity to genre can be a virtue in itself. Higgins has always had a devoted following among literary tough-guys like Norman Mailer and David Mamet, and his latest book has provoked a new round of crusty, defensive praise. It is also his most sophisticated effort so far.

In *Bomber's Law*, a young detective, Harry Dell'Appa, discovers that his fellow detective and nemesis, Bob Brennan, has become curiously lax in his efforts to nail Short Joey Mossi, an aging Mafia hit man. Dell'Appa, who has been assigned to take over the Mossi case, begins to suspect that Brennan has gotten to know his subject a little too well—or rather, that he sympathizes too fully with Mossi. As the cops sit together in a cold car, waiting for Mossi to appear, Brennan talks on and on, digressing into stories about other criminals and about his own life. Dell'Appa listens fitfully, letting his mind wander in time to other conversations, and moving slowly toward an understanding of what Brennan and Mossi have been up to. The real substance of *Bomber's Law* lies not in its fairly straightforward plot but in this cross-braid of digression and flashback. The fabric becomes startlingly elaborate; at one point we watch Dell'Appa recall a conversation with Brennan in which Brennan, speaking (at length) in a voice of another detective, interrupts that narrative with the voice of still another speaker. These characters, for all their gruff cynicism, are brilliant ventriloquists.

The detective's job—as many literary critics have observed—is like that of the reader: he or she must retrace the actions that constitute the plot and interpret them. This insight has bred countless "literary" detective novels; and in France (where the *roman policier* has always been taken more seriously) it influenced the development of the *nouveau roman* in the 1960s. In *Bomber's Law* this kind of self-consciousness sometimes mars the otherwise magnificent dialogue. Surely most Boston cops do not quote or allude to Poe, Dickens, Shakespeare, Nabokov, Eliot, Byron, and Thomas Mann in the course of a day's work. For the most part, however, Higgins sticks to a deeper and more homespun philosophy. The *Law* of the title, woven in and out of the book's endless palaver, is "the simple explanation...for so many of the lousy things that everybody, even good guys, nice guys like you and me...always seem to end up doing." The explanation: "We did it for the money."

That homely truth, running like a thread through every Higgins novel, traces a more elliptical design than ever before in *Bomber's Law*. Higgins appears to be expanding his interests, pressing out against the limits of his genre. The detective novel is based, after all, on violence, and rooted in a Manichean world-order; pursuers and pursued. Now Higgins, whose work always played off the moral ambiguities in that schema, has written a book in which the cops pursue each other. They do so for reasons that have less to do with law and order than with that great crucible of narrative fiction: character. Crime and punishment recede in *Bomber's Law* into a mosaic of stories about human motive. At one point in the novel Dell'Appa and his boss Dennison argue about the role of suggestion in suffering. "Yeah," Dennison says, "maybe the worry-waves just go out and cause sympathetic anxiety-vibrations, tremors, that kind of thing, in cosmic milk, so you get whitecaps kicking up in the cereal bowl, washing your karmic Wheaties all over the sports section and the funnies while you're trying to read them." Passages like these bring out the best and the worst in Higgins. It's easy to believe that his characters really talk like that. Still, one senses a kind of reactionary gruffness in the language, as though Higgins were expressing his own distrust of abstraction in the voice of his characters. When he ventures away from dialogue into narrative exposition he can be painfully clumsy. Perhaps that is why Higgins is so reluctant to take the next step, into a fiction where character would break free of any fixed formula. *Bomber's Law* is the work of a writer who has the power to stretch his genre to its limits, but who may never be able to break out of it. □

REVIEWERS

JOHN T. NOONAN *is United States Judge for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. He is the author of* Bribes, Contraception, Power to Dissolve, *and* The Scholastic Analysis of Usury.

STEPHANIE HARRINGTON *has written for the* Nation, *the* Village Voice, *and other publications.*

CARL L. BANKSTON III, *a historian and sociologist, teaches at Tulane University.*

ROBERT WORTH *is a graduate student in English at Princeton.*

LOYOLA HOUSE

The Guelph Centre of Spirituality
(Celebrating our 30th anniversary: 1964-1994)

In the 21 August 1993 issue of *The Tablet*, Margaret Hebblethwaite writes of the prominence of Loyola House in the retreat movement. She says that "amid the innovations Guelph has kept its tradition of being a solidly grounded and relatively traditionalist centre at the forefront of those who are updating Ignatian spirituality through fidelity to the text of St. Ignatius, reinterpreted in the context of today's world."

Are you looking for a quiet retreat with a spiritual guide? Are you interested in developing your ability to understand your interior life? Would your ministry benefit from our training programs? Come to Guelph!

Our 1993-94 general brochure is available. It will show you why Loyola House has a reputation for both tradition and innovation.

For further information, contact:

The Secretary
Loyola House
P.O. Box 245
Guelph, Ontario N1H 6J9 Canada

Phone: (519) 824-1250 • 9:30-11:30; 1:30-4:30, Monday-Friday

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from page 2)

cost to her and her family? Or are the integrity and maintenance of the souls in a woman's care—her spouse and children—also important? Does anyone really know what God's plan is for any woman found with a pregnancy that could kill her?

I don't claim to be a Solomon on this issue, but to judge from my experience with Project Rachel I don't think the church's representatives qualify either. I attended two sessions of a Project Rachel meeting in what is called a "peer group" counseling session. I was told by my peer counselor that God has forgiven me. After my second session I stopped attending, and received a follow-up phone call from my counselor. This is what I told her: "For what do I need forgiveness? What sin have I committed?"

What happened to me was a personal tragedy that could have been dealt with in a number of empathetic, nonjudgmental ways. In my experience, however, a woman who seeks help from the Catholic church in this matter is *assumed* to have sinned and to be in need of forgiveness. To this day, I find this a violation of my conscience, my sense that I did the only thing I could do. It's probable that I am alive today because I had the courage to do what I did. As my life has unfolded since that time six years ago, God has made me realize that he understood what his institution did not, and that judgment, if any is to be rendered, lies solely with him.

NAME WITHHELD

'Disputed questions' II

Los Angeles, Calif.

To the Editors: There is no doubt that Paul Baumann elucidated some important aspects of marriage in his "An Incarnational Ethic: Listening to One Another" [January 28], but it is disturbing that he seems to espouse an "either-or" attitude, playing into the hands of those who claim that recognizing the value of gay unions must of necessity militate against the sacrament of matrimony. This is simply not the case.

Mr. Baumann raises the central question when he asks, in the context of relationships, how we mirror God's image. Certainly in heterosexual marriage there is a trinitarian symmetry to the union of two people who participate in the creative act, bringing about a third person through the medium of their love for one another. Yet does that preclude the development of a theology of gay unions that can also imitate the life of the Trinity? After all, humans are not only material beings, and it could be that a gay union at its best can produce a spiritual, aesthetic, or cultural contribution to a community at least as important as the birth of another human. It may not be marriage, it may not be sacramental, but it also may not be sinful, and perhaps may even be intrinsically good.

God gave us appetites, and those appetites are good because they come from him. If we hunger, there is such a thing as food. If we are tired, there is such a thing as sleep. If we want to live forever, there is such a thing as heaven. For heterosexuals who feel sexual attraction, there is such a thing as matrimony. But what is the good and natural end of sexual urges for gay and lesbian people, since we know that the feeling of those urges is not itself intrinsically sinful? Can the proper goal of a naturally good—or at least neutral—desire be intrinsically evil?

Clearly, it will be some time before the *sensus fidelium* in the matter of homosexual acts manifests itself clearly in the temporal church. Perhaps none of us now living will see that day. In the interim, it seems to me that the best we can do is to separate the social taboos against homosexuality and homosexual acts from any real, assumed, or imagined theological biases against homosexuality and the proper fulfillment of that state.

Where theological bases do in fact exist that indicate immorality of the sexual fulfillment of homosexual desires, we must sift out those that are based on assumptions of immutable sex roles in society as well as those which are justice issues for outmoded social systems, such as the predominantly nomadic/agrarian mindset that homosexual acts militate against the common good because they deprive the community of laborers in the field. The rights and wrongs of a society whose existence depended on fertility, as codified in Leviticus, for example, or in the "four sins that cry to heaven for vengeance," are not necessarily the rights and wrongs of a world in which proliferation is no longer an immediate, objective, and intrinsic societal good.

And as for the bad experiences of James Nash ["On the Air: No Room for Dialogue," same issue], I would ask him to give us gay and lesbian Catholics the benefit of the doubt. We are not all fire-breathing hedonists pontificating on the glories of sexual excess. Like him, we work, pay our taxes, obey laws, give to the poor, care for our sick, and go to Mass on Sundays. That's the reality of the "gay lifestyle." We are merely caught in the gap between the modern reality of an instantaneous and global marketplace of ideas and the much longer process of how we as the church on earth do our best to live out the phenomenon of Pentecost within the confining parameters of time. Give us a break, and have some sympathy for a people caught in a small, temporary, philosophical crack in the eternal Mystical Body. As Cardinal Newman reminds us, "*In certis, unitas; in dubiis, libertas; in omnibus, caritas.*" ERIC STOLTZ

New views, old news

Tracy, Calif.

To the Editors: I hope Luke Timothy Johnson's article ["Debate & Discernment: Scripture & the Spirit," January 28] is read widely; it gives us a new opening in the discussion of the morality of homosexual acts.

In contrast, I think Paul Baumann was too quick on the trigger in some of his criticisms. If it's clear that God's sacred word revealed in Scripture is of necessity time-conditioned and in need of constant reinterpretation, surely Baumann's abstract "sexual metaphysics" (based largely on Gen. 1:27) might well be called in for some retooling. Baumann speaks of a "teleology of human sexuality" and "the ontological truth of procreative sex." Our ontology makes no claim of inerrancy.

ANDREW GALLIGAN

Slow down, Dr. Johnson

Birmingham, Ala.

To the Editors: Your five-voice focus on homosexuality was, overall, very rich and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

much appreciated. Allow me a couple of comments on Luke Timothy Johnson and Paul Baumann.

Dr. Johnson, toward the end of his long wind-up and just before letting his slider go, asks rhetorically: "Do we allow divorce (even though we don't openly call it that) when Jesus forbade it?" Sign me up for Opus Dei if you must, but the possibility that our church is silently overriding Christ's teaching on remarriage seems to me an inappropriate subject for a throw-away line.

Once in the thick of his discussion, Johnson notes the "relative paucity" of scriptural condemnations of homosexuality and their "off-handed" character. These things are supposed to add to our skepticism about Scripture's contested categorical bar to homosexuality.

I have not sat down with a Bible and abacus. I do wonder, though, how many explicit prohibitions of, say, fratricide I would find. And might not the "off-handedness" Johnson sees reveal not an "unreflective" incidentalness but, it could be argued, abiding, foundational, universal consensus? Johnson, a scholar, might want to slow down so we lay folks can better follow his insights.

In Baumann's commendably open teleological exploration, the childless heterosexual couple, unlike their homosexual counterparts, are not at a "metaphysical dead-end." For these folks "can be seen to strengthen the symbolic and poetic validity of this [human-race-wide procreative] 'saga.'"

The homosexual couple cannot strengthen this validity, no matter the intensity of commitment, depth of fidelity, or devotion to the next generation. (On this last item, surely such good works as coaching the basketball team or teaching CCD are part of the great human reproductive project, even if in a very different way than was getting up with my son Conor last night for some 4 A.M. refreshment.) The homosexual couple cannot strengthen this validity because, by incarnational lights, "body parts count." Danger resides in "positing a severe dichotomy between biology and covenant." Suspicion should attend "elevating relational values over embodied reality."

Given Baumann's insistence on strict alignment of symbolic import and chromosomal arrangement, I curiously await his position on the proper physiological prerequisites for presiding over our eucharistic celebrations.

KEVIN M. DOYLE

Gender isn't all

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: "Body parts count, and they signify. The mystery of sexual differentiation is fundamental to the appropriation of the biblical story...[L]ike Christ, we cannot transcend gender. Only as gendered creatures do we mysteriously mirror the creator."

With the foregoing as the foundation for his argument, Paul Baumann reasons that the church's traditional prohibition against physical expression of homosexual love is not only coherent, but justified. The foundation of Mr. Baumann's argument is unsound, however, because it is biased. Most particularly it is sexist; and from sexism proceeds heterosexism. The same argument from biology has been and continues to be employed to justify the subordination of women. Woman and man, having been created differently, fulfill their creator's purpose differently: in John Milton's words, "He for God only, she for God in him." The church continues to draw on arguments from biology to restrict the role of women in the church and in the world as well. Similar arguments have been and are still used to oppress people of color and the differently abled.

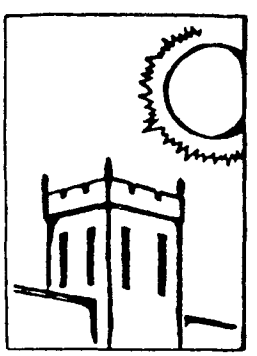
We are all created in God's image. In our wondrous diversity we mirror our creator. Rather than allowing our differences to divide us, we must come to see in them our creator's image.

ALEXANDRA I. TYLER

God made gays

Rochester, N.Y.

To the Editors: Paul Baumann says his argument about homsexuality comes down to what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. We were made male and female in the image and likeness of God, and we should not remake what God has done; therefore homosexuality is inconsistent with the truth of sexual love and



4th Annual Conference
UNIVERSITY FACULTY FOR LIFE
June 3-4-5, 1994

Fordham University, Manhattan Campus
Speakers at Plenary Sessions:
Hadley Arkes, Politics, Amherst College
Frederica Mathewes-Green, Feminists for Life
Bernard Nathanson MD, featured in "Silent Scream"
Robert Spitzer, SJ, Philosophy, Seattle University

An occasion for Pro-Life Faculty to gather with their peers.
For more information, contact: University Faculty for Life,
Box 2273, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

baby-making.

But what has God done? God has created some people in his (or her) image with an erotic attraction to persons of the same gender. God has made each homosexual person a man or a woman, not a neutral It (Baumann quoting Barth). Perhaps it's Baumann who is trying to remake what God has done. CASEY LOPATA

Dated treatment

Queens, N.Y.

To the Editors: As a *Commonweal* reader of more than forty years, I find myself for the first time somewhat disappointed in an issue. Your treatment of homosexuality, although useful as a beginning discussion, failed to note helpful, practical, and pastoral opinions that are already part of the Catholic understanding. Perhaps you should have reprinted Gregory Baum's article, first published twenty years ago [February 15, 1974], in which Baum, a Canadian theologian and Vatican II *peritus*, explained the range of Catholic moral reasoning on the question of allowing or blessing stable and committed same-sex unions.

Even more appropriate would have been an update of his article reporting the state of the question for today. As we struggle to prevent suicide, despair, alienation, and promiscuity among gay people, especially young people, we have a resource in the considerable body of authoritative moralists who enable us to present, within a Catholic context, considerations favoring the legitimacy of monogamous gay unions. In the tradition of Catholic moral theology, this approach now has the status of at least a probable opinion which can be followed.

In the speculative (albeit nonpastoral) spirit of your symposium, permit me to offer some paradigms for committed gay unions:

1. Such unions are not and cannot be marriages, but they can be "covenanted relationships and communities" in a manner analogous to the status of religious orders, which are covenanted, through the vows taken by their members, but are not sacramental, as are marriage and priesthood.

2. Covenanted relationships of gays and lesbians could be seen as something distinct from and more significant than nonsexual personal friendships, just as religious orders are seen as more substantial than lay groups such as the Holy Name Society or the Legion of Mary, whose members do not take the vows that bind religious to an intense communal mode of living.

Paul Baumann warns: "An ethic that welcomes homosexual acts by elevating relational values over embodied reality is suspect." Religous life does not exalt its relationships in community over marriage; yet it is holy in its modality. Religious life is productive of great good for the church. Cannot covenanted gay life, by analogy, have an honored status without lessening the rightfully exalted and primary modality of marriage? Consider how religious life is analogized to family life by the titles some orders confer: "abbot" (father); "brothers"; "mother superior"; "sisters."

Scripture scholar Luke Timothy Johnson called for "narratives of homosexual holiness," but your forum failed to include the voices of Dignity, Courage, and New Ways Ministries, which might well have been able to supply such narratives. I hope you will continue the dialogue you have begun. FRANK C. ARRICALE

The author replies:

Like Thomas Stahel, S.J. [Correspondence, March 11], Eric Stoltz favors elevating "the spiritual, aesthetic, or cultural contribution" of same-sex unions, of separating "social taboos...from any real, assumed or imagined theological biases," and dispensing with procreation as an "intrinsic societal good." As indicated in my essay and earlier in Correspondence [March 11], I think these developments are problematic; I especially think it is difficult to untangle the theological interest incarnational religion has in the creation of life from the gender relations inherent in human procreation. Can we develop "a theology of gay unions that can also imitate the life of the Trinity?" I am doubtful we can, at least at a sacramental level. I think Stolz also goes too far in suggesting that all our "appetites" are good because by definition they come from God. Obviously this is much too narrow an understanding of our freedom and too broad a definition of God's action.

Andrew Galligan calls for a "retooling" of Catholic sexual metaphysics. I think retooling has costs that we need to face up to, in this case the sacrifice of certain sacramental categories. Moreover, it is not clear to me in what way Scripture can be God's sacred word if it is "time-conditioned" in the way Galligan seems to imply. Finally, Galligan suggests that I have built my case "largely on Gen. 1:27." Not so. The normative value of heterosexuality pervades the Bible and is attested to by tradition and natural law.

Our friend Kevin Doyle detects in my argument a case for the relevance of gender to the priesthood. He's right. Let me hasten to add that I favor the institution of ecclesial offices for women comparable in authority and status to that of the priesthood, perhaps a college of women religious parallel to the college of cardinals.

I can detect little more than name calling in Alexandra Tyler's letter. I embrace no simple "argument from biology," and explicitly acknowledge the role culture plays in our appropriation of biology. Casey Lopata asserts that because some people have an "erotic attraction to persons of the same gender," and because persons are made in the image of God, then homosexuality is also made in the image of God. This syllogism goes nowhere. Substitute "to several people at the same time" for "persons of the same gender" in Lopata's letter and the problem becomes clear. There is no uninterpreted experience, and nothing demonstrates this better than our endless negotiations about sexuality. How we discern "what God has done" requires a more complete explanation of how body and spirit fit together than Lopata's naturalistic premise allows.

If I understand Frank Arricale, he argues that monogamous homosexual unions have already been condoned by authoritative Catholic teaching. Although I think such faithful relationships are of real value, I am not aware of any authoritative teaching that sanctions them.

PAUL BAUMANN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Honoring gay unions

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In "How Big Is the Table? Choice and Sexuality" [January 28] Dennis O'Brien acknowledges the fruits of the commitment of gay couples, stating that such loving devotion is not to be cast aside as "mere perversity and sin." Yet he is unsure that a committed homosexual relationship can conform to the meaning of marriage, which is "larger than life."

A sincere desire truly to open our church to what Luke Timothy Johnson ["Debate and Discernment: Scripture & the Spirit," same issue] calls "narratives of homosexual holiness" and to acknowledge the commitment of gay couples can be achieved while continuing to confer the sacrament of marriage only on heterosexual couples. Gay couples can be joined together in the church community with vows that are not sacramental. In this way, the church confers only on heterosexual unions the sacrament signifying the union as "larger than life" while truly opening its doors to gay couples.

ASSUNTA CASTÁN

We're here

Richmond, Calif.

To the Editors: I suggest that an aspect of the phenomenon of homosexuality was neglected in your package of articles. Whether one accepts an estimated percentage of 5 percent or 10 percent of gays and lesbians in a given population, it is highly probable that there are roughly 10 to 25 million homosexuals in the United States. Of these it's likely that at least 10 percent are Christians—this despite their frequent experience of bias, oppression, and even hatred on the part of straight Christians.

There are, then, hundreds of thousands, perhaps even more, of gay Christians in this country, some of whom serve as priests, religious, ministers, elders, deacons, theologians, seminary professors, even bishops. Just like straight people, we serve on parish councils and boards; we are liturgists, musicians, lectors, ushers, religious educators, youth ministers. Some of us may worship in gay churches, but more of us sit beside you each Sunday as we worship and pray together.

And, believe it or not, we are capable of feeling God's love for us and of marveling how that love transforms us. Gay Christians will continue to live lives based on the gospel, even as straights continue to debate whether we can truly be Christian and whether our relationships are acceptable in God's sight. Do get on with it.

SCOTT TAYLOR

CLASSIFIED

RATES: 90¢ per word; 12 words minimum. Advance payment required. Discounts and monthly billing available for repeat advertisers. For additional information call 212-732-0800 or write COMMONWEAL Classified, 15 Dutch St., Room 502, NYC 10038-3760.

Christian Audio Cassettes

Christianity as Viewed by an Outsider: World-renowned Hebraic scholar, Samuel Sandmel, shares his unique insights in this series of six audio cassettes in which he discusses: (1) *Paul, the Dominant Disciple*; (2) *Diversities in the Emerging Church;* (3) *A Comparative Study of the Gospels;* (4) *The Challenge and Consolidation of Christianity;* (5) *Jesus in the Gospels; and* (6) *Judaism in the Age of Jesus.* $54 postpaid. Money-back guarantee. Audio-Forum, Dept. 115, 96 Broad Street, Guilford, CT 06437.

Retreat

Private retreats in Northern Vermont on beautiful Lake Memphremagog, spectacular border views. *Optional themes*: theological/ecological reflection; biblical/liturgical spirituality; psychological development/sexual ethics; moral development/corporate ethics; environmental art/liturgical sculpture. International art gallery on premise. *Equi-Pax*—Center for Human and Ethical Resources, Newport, VT 05855. 802-334-8054.

Summer Course

"Introduction to the Ecumenical and Interreligious Movements" presented by the Atonement Friars at the Centro Pro Unione, Rome, June 27th to July 14th. For information: Summer Course, GEII, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1960, New York, NY 10115-1999 (212-870-2330). Registration deadline: April 30th.

L'Ecole Biblique

Subscriptions sought to have your name inscribed on a permanent memorial in the Holy Land. For information write: Fr. John McGuire, 5 Hillhouse Ave., New Haven, CT. 06505.

Writers Search

We're on a talent search for highly skilled writers who can combine theological knowledge with the ability to communicate effectively with teen-agers. Our search is for persons to write and revise Catholic high school religion textbooks that are engaging and faithful, appealing and substantial. If you think you may qualify for this free-lance work, please send the following: (1) a résumé of your background, (2) a sample of your writing that reflects theological insight, and (3) a brief (one-page) statement of your perspective on teaching religion to high school students, to Saint Mary's Press, Attn: Writers Search, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320.

Positions Available

Professor of English: Full-time professor of English, Ph.D., St. John's Seminary College. Teach a variety of English, first-fourth year of college. Second area of Humanities desired. Send cover letter, vitae, and three letters of recommendation by April 22, 1994 to: Eric J. Nicolet, Academic Dean, St. John's Seminary College, 5118 Seminary Rd., Camarillo, CA. 93012.
Assistant Librarian: Full-time assistant librarian. Professional, academic librarian, preferably a religious or a working knowledge of Catholic literature with a minimum of five years of professional experience. Responsibilities include a variety of both reference and technical services, online reference, OCLC cataloging using DDC. Some weekend and evening hours. Position available July 1, 1994. Send cover letter, résumé, and three letters of recommendation by Friday, April 22nd to Eric Nicolet, Academic Dean, St. John's Seminary College, 5118 Seminary Rd. Camarillo, CA 93012.

COMING
April 8
Education Issue

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Repent!

EDWARD T. OAKES

Nowadays most Christians labor under the impression that Saint Augustine was a rigorist. No doubt this is partly due to his strict sexual ethics, which arm-chair psychoanalysts too easily ascribe to an alleged "reaction formation" following his own mistress-filled past. But there is also his apparently harsh view of predestination and free will, with grace being absolutely necessary to salvation, yet restricted to the Christian dispensation—such an ironic and stingy position, it would seem, for the theologian who later became known as the Doctor of Grace.

But this is not how matters were perceived in Augustine's own time: it was his opponent Pelagius who was seen as the rigorist, including by himself. In a famous letter to Demetrias, a wealthy Roman matron who had decided to forsake her wealth and become a nun, Pelagius said that "since perfection is *possible* for humanity, it is *obligatory*." Frailty, then, is no excuse.

Augustine knew better. He saw (in his own life, to be sure, but also in the lives of the members of his diocese of Hippo) how much sin has infected the human soul, impairing our very ability to fulfill the moral law. Indeed, in his polemics against Pelagius he even compared the church to a hospital, where fallen humanity could recover its strength and find healing for its failings by growing in holiness through grace.

This image of the church as hospital came to mind last year when I first heard the news of the sex scandals at the minor seminary in Santa Barbara, California. Only it came with a rather sardonic twist: Has the church now become a hospital where it is mostly the doctors who are ill and where patients get sick from the ministrations of their physicians?

This unsettling thought emerged most clearly the day after the news of the scandal broke, when a reporter for the *New York Times* interviewed one of the former junior seminarians. "This morning, liberated by the release of a detailed report about the sexual abuse he and other students suffered for years at the hands of Franciscan friars, Michael Higgins danced. He danced to the music of the Grateful Dead....The music was about all the things his abusers took away from him: 'It's about women and meeting teen-aged girls and just dancing and having a lot of fun,' he said. 'It's about the stuff that would have made me feel normal, feel part of society.' Like other former students, Michael Higgins said his life has been a chaos of drugs, alcohol, broken relationships, and shameful secrets since some of his teachers and religious mentors at the seminary made him their sexual plaything."

America magazine recently published [January 22, 1994] an interview with Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M., the current provincial superior of the Santa Barbara Franciscan province, who had the unenviable task of investigating the long history of abuse in this seminary and then releasing a report to the public. Due to the exigencies of confidentiality, etc., his position no doubt carries with it a lot of restrictions on what he can say; nonetheless, the interview made me uncomfortable, with its talk of this crisis being a time of "painful grace," an opportunity to "grow in our preferential option for the poor."

Far better, it seems to me, than this fillip of post-Vatican II rhetoric would be Augustine's image of infection and disease. It is an image to which John Henry Newman returned time and again in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*: "Just as a man may be in good health, may have his arms and hands his own, his head clear, his mind active, and yet may just have one organ diseased, and the disease not at once appear, but be latent, and yet be mortal, bringing certain death in the event, so may it be with [Christians who tolerate habitual sin in themselves]."

And from that rather unnerving image Newman draws conclusions that probably will strike some people as unduly "rigorist," but which, in fact highlight why people are admitted into a hospital in the first place: to get well. But that can never happen if the infection is not only left untreated but is actively tolerated. So Newman concludes: "Never suffer sin to remain upon you; let it not grow old in you; wipe it off while it is still fresh, else it will stain; let it not get ingrained; let it not eat its way in, and rust in you. It is of a consuming nature; it is like a canker, it will eat your flesh."

No one denies, from whatever perspective of ecclesiastical opinion, that the church is now going through a period of extraordinary crisis. Any hopeful prognosis of that crisis, however, will first depend on an accurate diagnosis. And this is why the voice of Newman is so crucial: "Sin neglected not only stains and infects the soul, but it becomes habitual. It perverts and deforms the soul; it permanently enfeebles, cripples, or mutilates us....Do not stop to ask the degree of your guilt, whether you have actually drawn back from God or not. Let your ordinary repentance be as though you had. You cannot repent too much." □

Edward T. Oakes, S.J. teaches in the Religious Studies Program at New York University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lenten Reading

FROM LOYOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS

One Minute Nonsense
by Anthony de Mello, S.J.

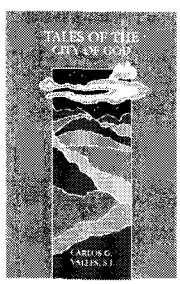
This is a collection of anecdotes told by a Master to his disciples. As de Mello tells us in his preface, "It will only take a minute to read each of the anecdotes that follow. You will probably find the Master's language baffling, exasperating, even downright meaningless. This, alas, is not an easy book! It was written, not to instruct, but to Awaken."
Pbk perfect, 180 pp., $10.95

More One Minute Nonsense
by Anthony de Mello, S.J.

The second part to de Mello's *One Minute Nonsense* contains an assortment of stories, proverbs, and sayings. You'll find wise, witty, yet puzzling answers to life's many questions.
Pbk perfect, 170 pp., $10.95

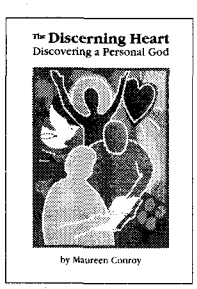
Contact with God
Retreat Conferences
by Anthony de Mello, S.J.

In this book de Mello offers the reader reasons for going on retreat as well as suggestions on how to get the most out of retreat experiences. As he explores the subjects of prayer, penance, and the love of Christ, de Mello shares some personal encounters.
Pbk perfect, 208 pp., $10.95



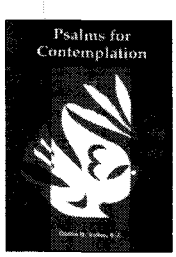
Tales of the City of God
by Carlos G. Valles, S.J.

Valles gleans parables from all times and cultures to bring out the eternal message of God before modern minds. He uses his life experience to help guide us in self-reflection.
Pbk perfect, 260 pp., $12.95



The Discerning Heart
Discovering a Personal God
by Maureen Conroy, R.S.M.

Conroy offers an experiential point of view in discussing Ignatius' classic work. You'll discover how Ignatius' rules for discernment can help in finding a personal relationship with God.
Pbk perfect, 220 pp., $13.95



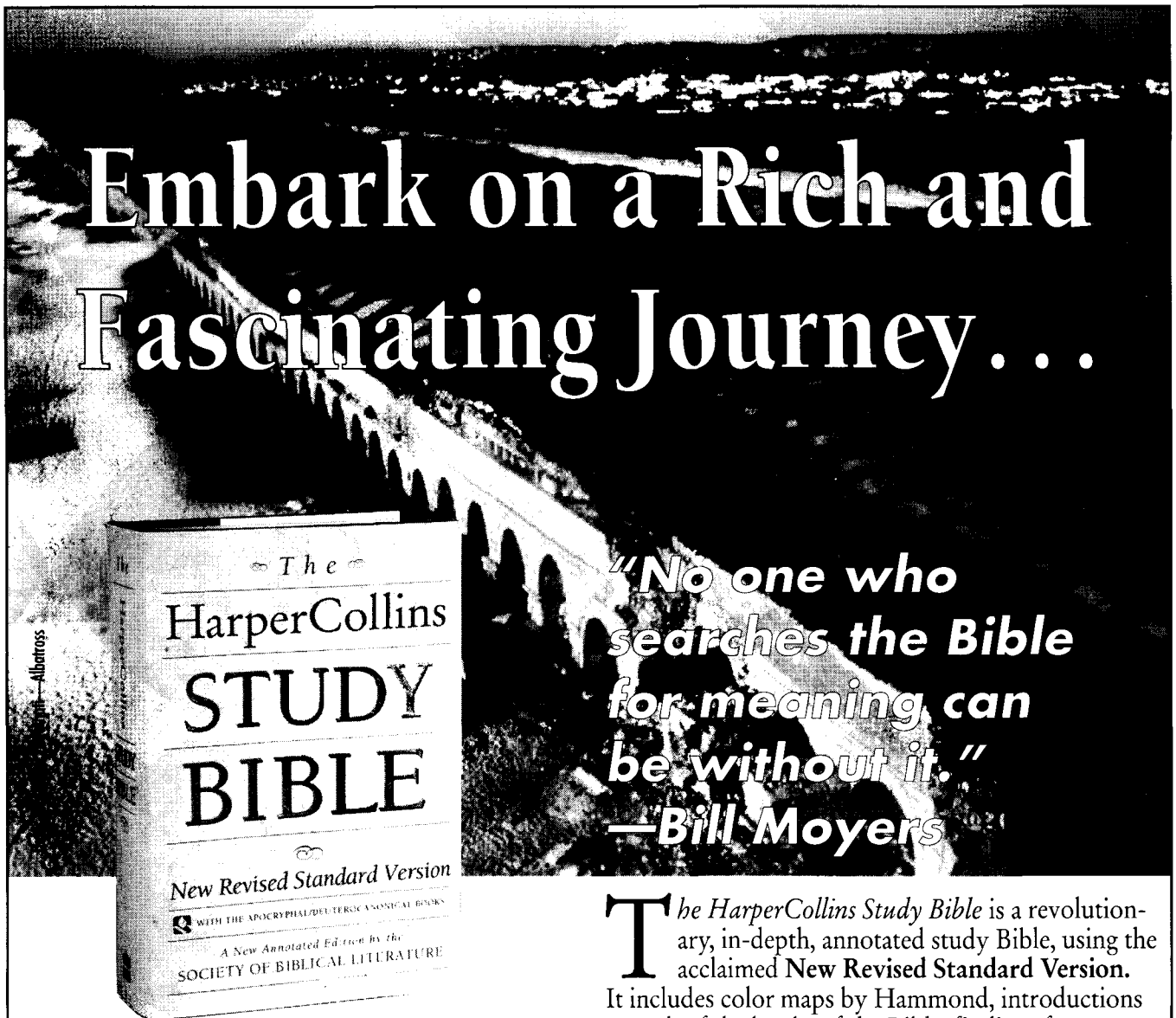
Psalms for Contemplation
by Carlos G. Valles, S.J.

Valles presents the intimate meaning of each psalm as well as the feelings it awakens in him. His reflections can be shared with a group or read individually to deepen one's own prayer life.
Pbk perfect, 296 pp., $12.95

Available at your religious bookstore or through Loyola University Press
3441 N. Ashland Avenue • Chicago, IL 60657
MasterCard/Visa orders call *(800) 621-1008 • (312) 281-1818* in Illinois

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Embark on a Rich and Fascinating Journey...



"No one who searches the Bible for meaning can be without it."
—Bill Moyers

The HarperCollins Study Bible is a revolutionary, in-depth, annotated study Bible, using the acclaimed **New Revised Standard Version.** It includes color maps by Hammond, introductions to each of the books of the Bible, findings from recent Dead Sea Scroll research, and more!

Critical acclaim for *The HarperCollins Study Bible:*

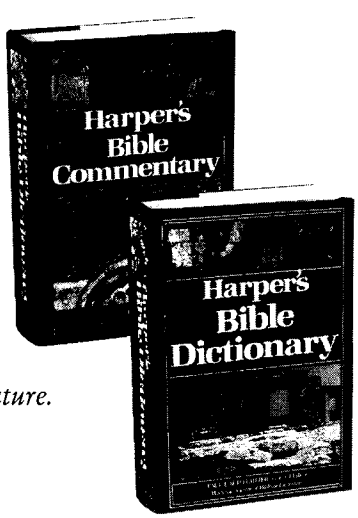
"A solid, refreshing, and inclusive alternative to [a] host of Bibles."—*Detroit Free Press*

"Ultimately, the breadth and depth of this study Bible, matched with its superior scholarship, make it a volume worth having in any collection."
—*Library Journal*

General Editor, Wayne A. Meeks • Associate Editors, Jouette M. Bassler, Werner E. Lemke, Susan Niditch, Eileen M. Schuller

Hardcover • $40

Complete your biblical reference library with these tried and true essential guides—the perfect companion volumes to *The HarperCollins Study Bible*—from the premier organization of biblical scholars, *The Society of Biblical Literature.*



Harper's Bible Commentary
Hardcover• $39.00

Harper's Bible Dictionary
Hardcover • $39.00

HarperSanFrancisco
A Division of HarperCollins*Publishers*
Also available from HarperCollins*Canada Ltd.*

Available at bookstores everywhere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED